



FITRA

**THE ISLAMIC
CONCEPT OF
HUMAN NATURE**

**YASIEN
MOHAMED**

The Book

Fitrah: the Islamic Concept of Human Nature explores what such luminaries as Ibn Abd al-Barr, the great scholar of Spain, ar-Raghib al-Isfahani and Ibn Taymiyyah have said about this pivotal term from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Yasien Mohamed tackles the work of writers closer to our own day, Ali Shariati and Sayyid Qutb, the dualism of whose views the author exposes with great courtesy and honesty. He contrasts *fitrah* with other views of human nature such as those of Freud, and B.F. Skinner and opens up the exciting possibility of Muslim thinkers throwing an entirely new light on the workings of the human soul.

The Author

Yasien Mohamed was born in Johannesburg in 1954. He was educated in Cape Town, Durban (B.A. in Arabic and Islamic Studies), Riyadh (M.A. in Islamic Psychology), Amsterdam (Doctorandus in Islamic Ethics), and he has since taught Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Cape Town and elsewhere. He currently lectures in the Department of Arabic Studies at the University of the Western Cape.



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Yasien Mohamed

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Introduction

Modern man is searching for his soul because he is alienated from its sources of nourishment—from Allāh, from the creation, and from tradition—from the sources which make him aware of his innate spiritual nature, his *fiṭrah*. Within his spiritual nature lies the deep, universal moral intuition that human beings are creatures of God to be respected. A return to his soul or his spiritual nature will require of him to return to its sources of nourishment. He will then rediscover the origin of his moral intuitions which is his innate spiritual nature or *fiṭrah*. By so doing he will come to know his Creator, for 'he who knows his self, knows his Lord'.

Westernised man is greatly influenced by the anti-religious trends within secular modernity. He is marred by materialism, alienated from tradition, and as a solitary individual has lost all the metaphysical certainties of his mediaeval brother. In their place he has pursued the ideal of material security which has been the cause of the spiritual crises in the modern world. Materialism has not delivered the heaven it promised.; and in pursuing it, modern man has overlooked his real nature and origin.

The doctrine of secularism seems to have supplanted religious doctrines, and to have gained sov-

ereignty over most areas of society. Science has displaced religion as a source of knowledge; liberalism has dethroned it from the seat of political power; and post-enlightenment ethics have shattered its moral base of authority and obedience. Religion seems to have retreated from the world of concrete reality to a world of abstractions and illusion, to be cherished in the hearts of men as a form of private consolation.

The image of religion as an illusion has dominated the modern mind since Marx, Feuerbach and Freud. This process is referred to by Max Weber as 'disenchantment'; the gradual displacement of the supernatural. Religion is now left as the secret solace of the soul, and no longer has any sway over politics, economy, education, morality, or the family. These institutions all seem to have declared their independence from religion.

Nevertheless, in spite of the growing secularisation of society, the vast majority of the population in many Western countries declare themselves as Christians, yet rarely go to church. It seems that religious identity and religious attachments remain strong in a secular society although outward religious behaviour is in decline. It is a universal phenomenon that human beings search for meaning in life. They may not find it in the Church, but their religiosity can take on other forms. Religious values might have been eroded by the process of secularisation, but they have not been altogether eclipsed. There is evidence of religious revival today, and, religious values still shape the moral frame of reference for many Westerners. This universal phenomenon, where faith persists even in a secular society, can be explained by the notion of *fitrah*,

the primordial nature of man. Deep within his subconscious, man, as a religious being, is aware of his own limitations in relation to the Almighty God. His instinct to recognise and worship Allāh is embedded in human nature and cannot be obliterated by the forces of secularisation. This religious instinct is natural to man; it is intrinsic to human nature, to *fiṭrah*.

The process of secularisation has affected the Muslim world in general and Muslim minorities living in the Western world in particular. Many modernised Muslims have become influenced by the anti-traditional, materialistic mentality emerging from the West. Modern-educated Muslims have become overawed by the West's scientific and technological achievements, and consequently, have adopted a secular view of life and of human nature. Secular theories of human nature, expounded by men like Darwin, Freud, and Skinner, have not only revolutionised Western man's understanding of himself, but have had a powerful impact on modernised segments of the Muslim world. The Darwinian theory of evolution is a classic example of the impact of secular trends on Muslim thought. Its metaphysical absurdity has unfortunately been integrated into the thought of some outstanding Muslim thinkers, who bend over backwards in an apologetic manner to accept it and even interpret Islamic teachings in accordance with it.

The young, educated Muslim's faith in the Qur'an has partly been shaken by evolutionary theory and other theories of human nature. There are too few efforts, on the part of traditional and modern, educated Muslim scholars, to formulate from Islamic

sources a genuine Islamic concept of human nature which would point the way to a systematic critique of secular theories of human nature.

This study of *fiṭrah* is intended to provide such an Islamic concept of human nature which can be used as a conceptual tool to critically assess secular theories of human nature from an Islamic perspective. Although a few psychoanalysts and humanist psychologists are sympathetic to religion, my critique is directed at the mainstream secular theories of human nature for two main reasons. Firstly, Darwin, Freud and Skinner have set the basis for more contemporary conceptions of human nature. Secondly, their philosophical perspectives with human nature conflict radically with the concept of *fiṭrah*; thus, bringing into clear focus, through comparison, the difference between the secular and the Islamic theories of human nature.

In Chapter 4, *fiṭrah* is employed as a conceptual term and its intellectual relevance in analysing secular concepts of human nature is demonstrated. Its purpose is not to condemn modern theories of human nature, but to bring the concept of *fiṭrah* into the arena of Islamic intellectual thought and to demonstrate its value in providing the basis for an Islamic assessment of secular views of human nature. Chapters 1, 2 and 3, however, project *fiṭrah* not only as an intellectual concept but also as a living reality affecting religious behaviour and Islamic spirituality.

Chapter 1 introduces the linguistic and religious meaning of *fiṭrah* as the unchanging natural predisposition for *good*; existing at birth in all human beings. This is followed by a discussion of *fiṭrah*'s

implications for human responsibility and for alienation. Since man is a moral agent by virtue of his free-will, he is responsible for his right and wrong actions. If he chooses to do wrong he becomes alienated from his true nature, his *fiṭrah*. For the benefit of Western readers, I compare *fiṭrah* with the Christian doctrine of original sin to bring into focus Islam's optimistic view of human nature and human responsibility.

Although I have attempted a definition of *fiṭrah* in Chapter 1, a single definition of it cannot be found. My definition will therefore involve an element of subjectivity, even if it is based on the Qur'an, *hadith* and authentic Islamic scholarship.

Chapter 2 deals with four interpretations of *fiṭrah*; the predestinarian, positive, dual and neutral interpretations of *fiṭrah*. It is evident from Chapter 1 that I have favoured the positive interpretation of *fiṭrah*, and it is this view which is defended in Chapter 2. I provide an exposition and critique of the predestinarian, neutral (classical views) and dual (modern views) interpretations of *fiṭrah*. A comparative analysis of specific elements of the dual, neutral and positive interpretations of the *fiṭrah* is covered in the last section of Chapter 2.

A salient criterion for distinguishing one view from the other is the extent to which both right and wrong are represented as either innate or external influences from the environment. For example, the neutral view represents both right and wrong as external agents of guidance and misguidance and is predisposed to neither, which is why it is designated as neutral. The view which regards man as innately good (evil being only an external agent of misguid-

ance) is optimistic, hence it is called 'positive'.

Modern scholars who regard man as innately both good and evil are adherents of the dual interpretation of *fiṭrah*. These are original designations used for the purpose of classification, and will not be found in classical works.

Taking the positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* as my point of departure, I develop the various implications of *fiṭrah* in Chapter 3:

A) I begin with the concept of *tawḥīd* as integral to innate human nature (metaphysical implication). This metaphysical implication provides the basis for the other implications of *fiṭrah* which can be viewed within the following frame of reference:

B) in terms of the hierarchy of knowledge and human cognitive faculties (epistemological implication);

C) its role in striving for right and avoidance of wrong (ethical implication);

D) its role as an important constituent in the dynamic interaction theory of the human psyche (psychological implication).

E) Implicit in this theory is the necessary assumption of human free-will which makes possible the transformation and transmutation of the self (volitional implication).

F) As this free-will is not absolute, the Law (*sharī'ah*) clearly defines the degrees of responsibility associated with the different stages of human development (legal implications).

In the title of this book I refer to *fiṭrah* as 'human nature'. This can be misunderstood to mean outward human behaviour, but, when I refer to his term I mean the natural, inborn predisposition of man. I

regard the study of *fiṭrah* as important, not only as a reality but also as a concept. An awareness of *fiṭrah* as a reality can pave the way for the universal goal of self-realisation. As a concept it can open a window to another view of Islam as the religion of human nature; furthermore it can be used as a yardstick to measure the value and validity of other theories of human nature.

This book is intended for the Western-educated Muslim who is intellectually perplexed and troubled by the disorders of the modern world. I hope it will serve its intended purpose.

Allāh knows best.

CHAPTER 1

The Definition of *Fitrah*

In attempting a definition of '*fitrah*', I give an exposition of its linguistic and religious meanings. The religious understanding of *fitrah* is based on the positive interpretation of *fitrah*. In Chapter 2, where I discuss all four interpretations of *fitrah*, I clarify the reasons for my preference for the positive interpretation of *fitrah*.

Suffice it to say that linguistic and positive religious explanations have one thing in common: both define *fitrah* as an inborn natural predisposition which cannot change, and which exists at birth in all human beings. What makes our religious understanding positive is that it not only acknowledges *fitrah* as a natural predisposition, but also one which is inclined towards right action and submission to Allah, the One God.

After discussing the implications of *fitrah* for human responsibility, I compare, for the benefit of Western readers, the Islamic concept of original goodness with the Christian concept of original sin. I argue that the doctrine of original sin, from an Islamic point of view, cannot be reconciled with the notion of Divine mercy nor with human responsibility. Since the doctrine of original sin features significantly in the Christian concept of human nature, and as Islam and Christianity are the world's

largest revealed religions, this aspect of their creeds presents an interesting contrast, well worth investigating.

1. THE LINGUISTIC MEANING OF FITRAH

‘Every new-born child is born in a state of *fitrah*. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian, just as an animal is born intact. Do you observe any among them that are maimed (at birth)?’¹

The word *fitrah* comes from the Arabic radicals, *fa ṭa ra*, the verbal noun being *faṭrun*. The root action means, he clave, split, slit, rent or cracked it. Note the usage of the first form *faṭarahū* (He created it); that is, He caused it to exist, newly, for the first time. Thus *faṭiru’s-samāwāt*, the Originator or Creator of the heavens.²

The second form, *faṭṭara (hu)* (verbal noun *taftir*), denotes repetition, muchness and frequency of the root action which means, as we saw, he clave, split, slit, rent or cracked it.³ *Fuṭira* (‘*ala shay*’) is equivalent to *ṭubi’a*, which is the passive form of *ṭab’a* (verbal noun *ṭab’un*) he sealed, stamped, printed or impressed, being a synonym of *khatama*, he sealed. Ar-Rāghib says that it means the impressing of a thing with the engraving of the signet and stamp; thus *ṭab’a’llāhu ‘alā qalbihi* ‘Allāh sealed his heart’, that is the unbeliever’s heart. Similarly, *khatama ‘alaihi*, pertains to the natural constitution which denotes a quality of the soul; either by creation or habit, but more especially by creation.⁴ Also, *ṭab’a’llāhu ‘alā amr* – ‘Allāh created (him) with a disposition to the affair, state or condition’. Like-

wise, *ṭubīʿa ʿala shayʿ* 'he was created with a disposition to a thing' which is synonymous with *jubila* or *fuṭira*.⁵ *Ṭabʿun* – originally a verbal noun – signifies nature or an inborn disposition. Its synonyms are *sajjiyah*, *jibillah*, *khalīqah*, *ṭabīʿah* and *mizāj*. These are names for innate natural disposition which cannot change, and which exists at birth in all human beings.⁶ Thus, *fiṭrah*, having the same meaning as *ṭabʿun*, linguistically means an inborn natural disposition.

The term *fiṭrah* literally means, creation; the causing a thing to exist for the first time; and the natural constitution with which a child is created in his mother's womb. It is said that this is the meaning in the Qur'an (30: 29), and in the central, opening *ḥadīth*.⁷

2. THE RELIGIOUS MEANING OF FITRAH

In the context of the *ḥadīth*, according to Abū Ḥaytham, *fiṭrah* means to be born either prosperous or unprosperous [in relation to the soul]:

'And if his parents are Jews, they make him a Jew, with respect to his worldly situation; [i.e. with respect to inheritance, etc.] and if Christians, they make him a Christian, with respect to that situation; and if Magians, they make him a Magian, with respect to that situation; his situation is the same as that of his parents until his tongue speaks for him; but if he dies before his attaining to the age when sexual maturity begins to show itself, he dies in a state of conformity to his preceding natural constitution, with which he was created in his mother's womb.'⁸

Fiṭrah is also associated with Islam and being born as a Muslim. This is when *fiṭrah* is viewed in respect of the *shahādah* – that there is no god but Allāh and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh – which makes a person a Muslim. *Fiṭrah*, in this sense, is the faculty, which He has created in mankind, of knowing Allāh. It is the natural constitution with which the child is created in his mother's womb, whereby he is capable of accepting the religion of truth.⁹ That *fiṭrah* refers to religion is further shown in a tradition in which it is related that the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, taught a man to repeat certain words when lying down to sleep, and said: 'Then if you die that same night, you die upon the *fiṭrah* (in the true *dīn*).' Also by the saying: 'The paring of the nails is of the *fiṭrah* (i.e. of the *dīn*).'¹⁰

This meaning is affirmed by *sūrah* 30 *āyah* 30:

'Set your face to the dīn in sincerity (ḥanīfan) which is Allāh's fiṭrah (the nature made by Allāh) upon which He created mankind (fatāra'n-nas). There is no changing the creation of Allāh. That is the right dīn but most people know not.'

Apparently Abū Hurairah, may Allāh be pleased with him, cited this verse after the central *ḥadīth*, which means that, in his view, the *fiṭrah* of the *ḥadīth* is the same *fiṭrah* in the *āyah*. The *āyah* refers to *fiṭrah* as good because the right religion is being described as Allāh's *fiṭrah*. Thus according to Abū Hurairah, *fiṭrah* is associated with the *dīn* of Islam.¹¹

Since Allāh's *fiṭrah* is engraved upon the human soul, mankind is born in a state in which *tawḥīd* is integral. Since *tawḥīd* is intrinsic to man's *fiṭrah*,

the prophets, peace be upon them, came to remind man of it, and to guide him to that which is integral to his original nature. The *ayah* describes a *fiṭrah* of primordial faith which Allāh Himself implanted in human nature. It implies Islam's essential message of submission to the will of Allāh as taught and practised by all the prophets.

The Laws or the *shari'ahs*, which the prophets were sent with, are guiding lights to the essential faith in Allāh which is created in every human being. Furthermore, since this faith comes from Allāh, it naturally follows that the only laws capable of guiding man back to it must also come from Allāh, hence Islam is also called *dīn al-fiṭrah*, the religion of human nature.

That every child is born in this pure state of *fiṭrah* is also supported by the following *ḥadīth* concerning the polytheists:

'It is related that the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, said that he saw in a vision an old man at the front of a large tree and around him were children and in the vision he was told that the old man was Ibrahim and that the children who were around him were the children who, before attaining the age of discretion, had died. At this, some of the Muslims had asked him: "And the children of the polytheists too, Messenger of Allāh?" The Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, replied: "The children of the polytheists as well."¹²

Being with Ibrahim meant being in Paradise, and this includes children of polytheistic families. It is clear, from the Qur'an and from the *ḥadīth*, that

every child is born with a pure nature, as a Muslim. Islam recognises that all children, whether born of believing or unbelieving parents, go to Paradise if they die before attaining the age of discretion.

Imām an-Nawawī defined *fiṭrah* as the unconfirmed state which exists until the individual consciously acknowledges his belief. Hence, if a child were to die before he attains discretion he would be one of the inmates of Paradise. This view applies to the children of polytheistic parents as well, and is supported by the above-quoted *ḥadīth* (see the Positive View of *Fiṭrah*). The legal implication of this *ḥadīth* is that all children are born pure, sinless and predisposed to belief in one God; moreover they are of the inmates of Paradise; however, if their parents are non-Muslims, the religion of their parents will be applicable to them in this world.¹³

Islam is also called *dīn al-fiṭrah*, the religion of human nature, because its laws and its teachings are in full harmony with the normal and the natural inclination of the human *fiṭrah* to believe in and submit to the Creator. Like the word *al-Islam*, the word *dīn* also means, according to Lane, obedience and submission, among other meanings. Allāh states:

'And who is better in obedience (in dīn) than he who resigns himself to Allāh?'
(Qur'an 4: 124)

'There shall be no compulsion in obedience (dīn).'
(Qur'an 2: 257)

Ad-dīn implies religion in the widest sense of the word, embracing both the practical aspects of the

acts of worship and ordinary transactions of life, and the teachings of religion; and it is a name for that whereby one serves Allāh.

'Truly, the religion (dīn) in the sight of Allāh is al-Islam.'

(Qur'an 3: 17)

And, according to Lane, it means particularly the religion of *al-Islam*. The synonyms for *ad-dīn* are *ash-sharī'ah* (the law), *tawhīd* (Oneness of Allāh) and *wara'* (caution). *Ad-dīn* also comes from the verb *dana*, meaning 'he was indebted'. This is significant, according to al-Attas, because man is indebted to Allāh for his existence and sustenance. The believer will realise that his spirit acknowledged Allāh in pre-existence (see Chapter 2), and that the debt that he must return is his self, and this can be done by service and submission to Allāh. This return implies a return to man's inherent spiritual nature, to his *fiṭrah*. The one who submits to Allāh is called *'abd* (a slave) of Allāh, and his service is called *'ibadah* (slavery or conscious submission to the will of Allāh). By worshipping Allāh in such a manner, man is fulfilling the purpose of his creation and existence.

'I have not created Jinn and man but that they should serve Me (li ya'buduni).'

(Qur'an 51: 56)

Such worship or submission does not entail loss of freedom, for, freedom is to act as one's true nature demands; that is, as one's *fiṭrah* demands. Al-Attas succinctly explains the connection between submission, *fiṭrah* and *dīn* as follows:

'When we say that such a man is fulfilling the purpose for his creation and existence, it is obvious that that man's obligation to serve God is felt by him as normal because it comes as a natural inclination on the man's part to do so. This natural tendency in man to serve and worship God is also referred to as *din*, ... here in the religious context it has a more specific signification of the natural state of being called *fiṭrah*. In fact *din* also means *fiṭrah*. *Fiṭrah* is the pattern according to which God has created all things Submission to it brings harmony, for it means realisation of what is inherent in one's true nature; opposition to it brings discord, for it means realisation of what is extraneous to one's true nature.'¹⁴

3. FITRAH AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

The predestinarian view of *fiṭrah* (see Chapter 2) makes nonsense of human responsibility because in that view man is born either in a state of good or evil. Although the dual and the neutral view of *fiṭrah* allow for human free-will and responsibility, I prefer to explain human responsibility in terms of the positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* which I have briefly discussed above as part of the religious meaning of *fiṭrah*. The notion of free-will and responsibility will be elaborated in Chapter 3, but in this section I only wish to make a few introductory remarks on human responsibility.

Man is distinguished from the rest of the creation because he has been endowed with intellect (*ʿaql*) and free-will (*iradah*). The intellect enables him

to discern right from wrong and the will enables him to choose between right and wrong. He can use these faculties to complement his *fiṭrah* and to please Allāh or to be untrue to it and displease Allāh. The choice is his. The prophets and Divine revelation are external sources of guidance to guide the intellect and will of man. The Qur'an declares that the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, enjoins the right and lawful things (*ma'ruf*) and forbids the wrong and unlawful things (*munkar*). Man is responsible for his actions and accountable to Allāh for every atom of right and wrong that he does. It is this sense of accountability that guides man to act in accordance with the Divine will. It empowers him to struggle against the wrong-doing of his lower self (*nafs*) as well as the negative influences of the social circumstances. The central *ḥa-dīth* makes plain that it is the social circumstances after the birth of the child that causes the individual to diverge from *fiṭrah*. Hence if someone follows an aberrant path it is not because of any innate wrong within his nature, but because of the emergence of the lower self or *nafs* after birth, and negative effects in the social circumstances.

The concept of *fiṭrah* as original goodness, in my view, does not merely connote a passive receptivity to good and right action, but an active inclination and a natural innate predisposition to know Allāh, to submit to Him and to do right. This is man's natural tendency in the absence of contrary factors. Although all children are born in a state of *fiṭrah*, the influence of the environment is decisive; parents may influence the religion of the child by making him a Christian, Jew or Magian. If there

are no adverse influences, then the child will continuously manifest his *fitrah* as his true nature. Since many infants are born with gross physical deformities, the maiming referred to in this *ḥadīth* is not meant in the physical sense; it means that all children are born spiritually pure, in a state of *fitrah*. The reference to animals born intact in the central *ḥadīth* should be viewed as an analogy to illustrate the parallel spiritual wholeness of children at birth.

It is precisely because of man's free-will and intellect that he is able to overcome the negative influences of the environment and attain to the highest level of psycho-spiritual development, *an-nafs al-muṭma'innah*, 'the self made tranquil'. At this level, his inner and outer being, his soul and body, are able to conform to the requirements of his *fitrah* and the dictates of the *sharī'ah*. He actualises his *fitrah*, and attains psycho-spiritual integration and inner peace.

4. ALIENATION FROM FITRAH

The central *ḥadīth* suggests that circumstantial (i.e. parental and other social) influences cause man to change and become alienated from his *fitrah*. However in Qur'an 30: 30 ('*There is no changing the creation of Allāh.*') suggests that *fitrah* is a universal unchanging given of the human constitution. This meaning is consistent with the linguistic (see 1.1) definition of *fitrah* as innate natural disposition which cannot change, and which exists at birth in all human beings. The synthesis of the meanings of both statements is that although *fitrah* remains a universal unchanging given of the human consti-

tution, people may, because of the elements of intellect and free-will, decide and choose to conduct themselves in a wrong or unlawful manner. All the children of Adam, including those who deviated from the path of *tawḥīd*¹⁵, possessed *fiṭrah*. Civilisations which have been condemned and destroyed by Allāh because of their practice of polytheism (*shirk*) and unbelief (*kufr*), possessed *fiṭrah*. *Fiṭrah* is a universal and immutable given of the metaphysical human constitution, and as a rule, cannot be corrupted or altered. No wrong action can pollute the Divine spirit which Allāh has blown into man (Qur'an 15: 29) despite the many generations of polytheism and unbelief. For example, a generation whose forefathers were *mushrikūn* (those who practise *shirk*) does not possess a *fiṭrah* of a lesser quality than a generation of believers. However, both *shirk* and *kufr* represent the antithesis of *fiṭrah* by undermining its very object and *raison d'être*; *kufr* is a rejection of the oneness of Allāh (*tawḥīd*). When an individual commits *shirk* or *kufr* he denies his own nature. *Fiṭrah* which is integral to man's spirit (*rūh*) was created by Allāh so that man may acknowledge Him as the Lord Who has power over all things. *Tawḥīd* is intrinsic to man's *fiṭrah* because Allāh in His infinite wisdom intended for man to know Him as the One God. This is why man was able to acknowledge his Lord before his existence on earth, that is, in his pre-existence state. (See Tustari's commentary on Qur'an 7: 172 in Chapter 2).

The function of the prophets and Divine revelation is not only to remind man about that which he already knows (that is, *tawḥīd*), but also to teach him that which he does not yet know (that is,

sharīʿah). Man already knows *tawḥīd* because of the pre-existent *fiṭrah* as well as his earthly unchanging *fiṭrah*. The prophets have come only to remind man of *tawḥīd*; the choice is left to the individual, as suggested in the following verse:

'Surely, this is a reminder; so whoever wills, let him take a way to his Lord.'
(Qur'an 76: 29).

Knowledge of the Divinely revealed laws, the methodology of worship and devotion, etc. are acquired by man from *sharīʿah* which is based on Divine revelation and the teachings of the prophets. Since every individual is endowed with the innate knowledge of *tawḥīd*, he is held accountable for his belief in Allāh precisely because of his *fiṭrah*. Not every soul, however, will be held accountable for not practicing *sharīʿah* because knowledge of *sharīʿah* is acquired only by those who have received the message of the Divine revelations and the teachings of the prophets.

The distinction between the inborn knowledge of *tawḥīd* (which includes the knowledge of right and wrong) and the acquired knowledge of *sharīʿah* (which includes what is lawful and unlawful) is significant because of the legal implications of each. The *mushrik*, one who violates *tawḥīd*, will not be pardoned for his polytheism, irrespective of whether he received the message of Islam or not. On the other hand, the practice of the *sharīʿah* is only required from the Muslim while the non-Muslim (who did not receive the message of Islam) is not expected to fulfill this obligation. An individual may be forgiven for not practising *sharīʿah* if he had not re-

ceived the message of Islam, but he will not be forgiven for rejecting *tawḥīd*. The Muslim will thus be held responsible for both *tawḥīd* and *sharī'ah*. Dr. Faruqi Aḥmad Dasuqi,¹⁶ who holds this view, adds that the *ḥunafa'*¹⁷ of past centuries had acknowledged *tawḥīd* and will not be held accountable for *sharī'ah*.

Apart from the chosen prophets, I venture to say that there is no difference between the *fiṭrah* of individual men: all men are endowed with the same or an 'equal' *fiṭrah*. The believer is in harmony with his *fiṭrah* because his instincts are directed in service of Allāh, but the unbeliever is alienated from his *fiṭrah* because his instincts are in the service of everything else besides Allāh. The reason for man's destruction of himself and his environment is that he has become alienated. Nevertheless, he can overcome this estrangement from his natural essential self by reconciling his will and intellect with the Divine will and knowledge. It is man's recourse to Islam which will enable him to effect such a reconciliation.

5. THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

Religions may be contrasted with secular philosophies in that the former recognise the transcendent principle of human nature while the latter tend to view man as a material being (see Chapter 4 on the secular theories of human nature). Religions usually refer to this transcendent principle as the spirit or the soul in man. Most religions recognise three dimensions within man: body, mind and spirit. Secular theories of human nature tend to recognise only the body and sometimes the mind. West-

ern psychologists such as Carl Jung recognise the spiritual dimension not as an independent unchanging reality, but as part of the human psyche. Religions in general, with the exception of Hinayana Buddhism, recognise the spiritual dimension of man as a distinct unchanging reality of human nature. The first step towards self-knowledge is the recognition of our inmost spiritual essence which is universal in man and which is immortal. It is this innate spirituality which explains the urge at the heart of every man for betterment and self-realisation; and it is this human spirit which explains man's capacity to emerge out of darkness into light and goodness. This emergence has been the unfailing history of man: nothing can stop the human soul from projecting itself nearer to the source of all good, Allāh. Islam and Christianity both recognise this innate spirituality but they differ in the methods by which they attain to this self-realisation, and they also differ with respect to their views of innate human nature. For the Christian view I need to turn to the doctrine of original sin and compare it with the doctrine of original goodness in Islam. Such a comparison will bring into focus the divergent perspectives of human nature of two major religions of the world.

Christianity, in all the varied forms in which it exists today, is probably the largest religious movement. It emerged out of Judaism as a religion of salvation by faith. Christianity became a universal religion of redemption, and its world-renouncing strain has been strong for a great part of its history. Judaism and Islam were never so dominated by monasticism and the ideal of celibacy. This is

not to say that Christianity did not have a world affirming strain in it. The Kingdom of God was an imminently arriving state of this earth. With emphasis on the person of Jesus, peace be upon him, rather than his preaching, salvation was to be by faith-union with Jesus in his supposed death and resurrection. Jesus, peace be upon him, was exalted to heaven and acclaimed as Lord, Son of God, and the meaning of Messiah – an anointed prophet-king – was altered radically.

Paul was the main figure to work out Christian theology almost entirely in terms of the doctrine of man. Jesus' two worlds are reinterpreted in terms of a great contrast between man in bondage to the flesh and man redeemed in Christ. This theology is set out in the first eight chapters of *The Epistle to the Romans*.¹⁸ The flesh (*sarx*) is man in his weakness and the spirit (*pneuma*) is the Divine breath and power of life which makes man inwardly aware of himself as a person. The whole person is either bound to sin or redeemed in Christ. As a rabbinically trained Jew, Paul had to integrate his new gospel of salvation with the old doctrine of creation and so he began the development of the Christian epic story:

'Creation had originally been perfect, but Adam fell and mankind has since been in bondage to sin; but through Christ, the second Adam or Last Man, the world or mankind are being restored to their original perfection. Thus in the Christian doctrine of man the central theme is that Christ is the Creator's proper (=own) Man.'¹⁹

To make this scheme more intelligible, Paul had to emphasise both the parallels and the contrasts between Adam and Christ, peace be upon both of them. Adam was first made in the image of God, but Christ is the true and final image of God. Adam's disobedience plunged mankind into ruin, but Christ's obedience restored mankind. Adam brought wrath and guilt upon mankind, Christ has brought grace and acquittal.

This contrast profoundly affected later Christian thought. The Christian doctrine of man has two themes, the Divine image and the Fall. Since the latter theme is more directly relevant to my discussion of original sin I shall focus on this aspect. Adam's disobedience plunged the human race into ruin, and fallen man could not of himself do good, please God or gain salvation.

A good example of the classic Christian doctrine of man is Milton's Christian epic *Paradise Lost* (1667). The themes are the special creation of man by God, the Divine image in man, original righteousness, the Fall through man's disobedience, the curse on man and woman, and the ensuing original sin. This scheme was wrecked by Darwinism and today liberal and humanist theologians take over the evolutionary view of man's gradual ascent, seeing Christ as the pinnacle of human development. Others, such as Rudolf Bultman and Paul Tillich, have built their theology on an existentialist doctrine of man.

The Christian is born in sin and in an impure state, and cannot redeem himself by his own inner resources, but only through Christ. Salvation for the Christian is centred on an external entity – the

mystical body of Christ in which the Christian must participate in order to be saved.

By contrast, in Islam the redemptive potential is centred in the individual himself, who engages in meaningful intercourse with the guidance provided by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Salvation in Islam depends on faith (*īmān*) and good conduct (*ihsān*), and not on faith alone. The Qur'an emphasises the exertion of the will, for 'there is nothing for man but that which he strove for'. This notion of the will also has implications for responsibility. A person is responsible only for the manner in which he exercised his own will and not the will of other persons.

Christians believe that Christ has paid the wages of sin through his death, and having suffered for all men's sins, it is now for man to acknowledge Christ as his saviour in order to be absolved from his sins. Salvation is based on this faith. Without the doctrine of original sin there would be no need for a saviour and, consequently, the trinity, the crucifixion and the resurrection would become meaningless.

Islam rejects the premises of these doctrines, especially the concept of original sin which is alien to Islam and inconceivable to the Muslim mind. Islam has a different version of the Fall. Adam acknowledged that he had gone astray and sincerely sought Allāh's forgiveness which was granted him unconditionally. Adam and his progeny descended from bliss to the earth because of his error, and yet, none of his children inherited the blame for his error. The volitional implication of *fitrah* is that man is responsible for his own wrong actions. It is inconceivable to Muslim thinking that mankind should

be punished for wrong actions that others did. The concept of Divine forgiveness features strongly in the Qur'an, for Allāh accepts the sincere repentance of His slaves.

'But the devil made them slip from it, and caused them to depart from the state in which they were. And We said, "Down with you and be henceforth enemies unto one another; and you shall have in the land a state of settledness and necessities of life for a period."

Then Adam received words (of guidance) from his Lord and He accepted his repentance: truly, He is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Compassionate.'

(Qur'an 2: 36-37).

Tawbah (literally, turning, i.e. away from wrong action, and to Allāh) or repentance plays a very significant and decisive role in a Muslim's life. Although man is born in a state of original goodness or *fiṭrah*, he is also subject to temptation and folly. Allāh has granted him the ability and opportunity to repent which means that he should admit his errors and turn remorsefully away from them to Allah.

Knowledge of Divine mercy as well as knowledge of the innate goodness of the human *fiṭrah*, serves three very important functions: firstly it gives the believer hope of salvation and success; secondly, it gives him confidence in his own potential to do right and resist wrong; thirdly, it exhorts and admonishes him to actively pursue all that is right and resist all that is wrong. These are the merits of sincere repentance. Just as the Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, repented and was pardoned for his

wrong action, so may his descendants repent and be pardoned for their wrong actions.

Confession and penance is a fundamental pillar of the Roman Catholic Church, but for the rest of the Christian world it holds virtually no functional value. Belief in Christ as the Saviour is of primary importance, even for the Catholic who engages in penance mainly as a means of self-discipline or self-retribution. No amount of confession or repentance can save the Christian from the belief in Christ as the Saviour. Adherence to this doctrine can be problematic when viewed in the light of the doctrine of original sin.

Neither Islam, common sense or modern Western law, hold a person responsible for the deeds of someone else. Certain awkward questions may also be posed to the adherents of this doctrine. For example, does inheritance of Adam's sin mean that man is born innately sinful or guilty of a sin he did not commit or both? Did Christ's suffering change human nature or did it only absolve man of guilt for the sin he never committed, or both? If man is born innately evil and sinful why is he still capable of choosing good over evil? What happened to the souls before Christ who could have had the benefit of the latter's alleged suffering; were they saved by the Saviour they neither knew nor acknowledged or were they just too unfortunate to be born at the wrong time? These questions are asked in all sincerity of the believing Christian whose faith every Muslim is required to respect.

To conclude, *fiṭrah* may be defined as a natural innate predisposition for good and for submission to the One God. The four different interpretations

of *fitrah* are discussed in Chapter 2. While the concept of *fitrah* offers a hopeful and positive outlook for the Muslim, the doctrine of original sin is fraught with negative connotations and complex dogma. To the average Christian, man is impure and bound for eternal damnation, even if he leads a life of virtue, if he does not accept Christ as his saviour. Apart from the Christian theory, there are secular theories of human nature which are also subject to determinism, fatalism and pessimism. These secular theories are contrasted with *fitrah* in Chapter 4 to highlight the basic features of the Islamic concept of human nature.

If, in this chapter, the reader has not gained a clear conception of what *fitrah* is, it should at least be clear to him what it is not. *Fitrah* does not refer to man's outward behaviour; nor to his psyche, personality or character. A definition of *fitrah* does not involve the role of man as an individual or a collectivity as such. Rather, *fitrah* pertains to the deep, common spiritual essence of man. It is humankind's natural and universal innate predisposition for goodness and submission to One God. This understanding is important for a reading of the subsequent chapters.

Notes and References

1. I. M. Ḥanīf, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim biṣṣharḥ al-Naṭawī*, Book of Qadr, Vol. 16 (al-Matba'at al-Misriyyah bi al-Azhari, 1930) p.207.
2. Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-ʿArab al-Muḥit*. Vol. 4., ed. A. al-ʿAlayall, (Beirut: Daru Lisan al-ʿArab, 1988), pp. 1108-1109; cf. also, al-Isfahani, al-Raghib, *Muʿjam Mufradat Alfaz al-Qurʿan* ed. Nadīm Marʿashli. (Darul Karib al-ʿArabi, 1984) p.2415; cf. also, Lane, E. W., *Arabic-English Lexicon*. 2 volumes. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1972), p.397.
3. This repetition also applies to the 7th form verb *infatarā*, 5th form *tafattara* and the 1st form *fatarā*, e.g. *idha's-sama'u-nfatarat* 'When the heaven shall become cleft', (Qur'an 82: 1), and *yakadu's-samawatu yatafattarna minhu* 'The heavens almost become repeatedly rent in consequence thereof', (Qur'an 19: 92), and *tafatarat qadamahu* 'his feet became cracked'.
4. Lane, *Ibid.*, p.1823; al-Isfahani, al-Raghib, *Kitab al-Dharr'ah ila Makarim al-Sharr'ah*. ed. Abu'l-Yazid al-ʿAjami, (Cairo, 1987), p.113.
5. Lane, *Ibid.*, p.1823.
6. Yasien Mohamed, *The Islamic Conception of Human Nature with Special Reference to the Development of an Islamic Psychology*. unpublished M.A. thesis, (Cape Town: Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, 1986), p.74; cf. also, Lane, *Ibid.*, p.1823; al-Isfahani, *al-Dharr'ah*, op.cit., p.113; al-Isfahani, *Alfaz*, op.cit., p.310.
7. Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-ʿArab*, op.cit., p.1109; cf. also Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, op.cit., pp.2415-2416.
8. Ibn Manzur, *Ibid.*, p.1109; Lane, *Ibid.*, pp.2415-16.
9. ʿAlī ibn Muhammad al-Sayyad al-Sharif Jurjani, *Kitab al-Taʿrīfat* ed. ʿAbdul Munʿim al-Hafani. (Cairo: Darul Rashad, 1991), p.190; cf. also Ibn Manzur and Lane, *Ibid.*
10. See Ibn Manzur and Lane, *Ibid.*
11. Muhammad al-Ansari A. A. Qurtubi, *Al Jamʿu al Ahkam*

- al-Qur'an* Vol. 12. Part 14. (Cairo: al-Maktabu al-ʿArabiyyah, 1967), p.25.
12. *Ibid*, p.30; cf. Ibn Manzur, *Ibid*.
13. Ibn Taymiyya *Darʿu Taʿarud al-ʿAql wa al-Naql*. Vol.8, ed. Muhammad Rashad Saʿim. (Riyadh: Jamiʿat al-Imam Muhammad ibn Saʿud al-Islamiyyah, 1981), p.382-3.
14. S.M.N. Al-Attas, *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future*, London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1985, pp. 57-58.
15. cf. Lane, *op.cit.*, for the meaning of *ad-dīn*.
16. *Tawhīd* is the corner-stone of Islamic belief which was taught by all the prophets. The Arabs deviated from *tawhīd* but it was restored to its original purity with the advent of Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace. Divine unity is expressed as *la ilāha illʾAllāh* 'There is no deity but Allāh' and together with his expression of *Muḥammadun Rasulu'llah* 'Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah', a person is admitted into the fold of Islam. *Tawhīd* implies that Allah is One, and that He is one and unique in His essence (*dhat*), His attributes (*ṣifat*), and in His works. This monotheistic conception of Allah liberates man from subservience to everything and everyone, and is the basis for the unity of mankind. The antithesis of *tawhīd* is *shirk* which is considered to be the only unforgivable wrong action (*Qur'an* 4: 48), and it signifies the association of partners with Allah. Blind submission to one's own desires is also described as *shirk* (*Qur'an* 25: 43).
17. Dasuqi, F. A. *Muhadarat fi al-ʿAqida al-Islamiyyah*, (Alexandria: Darul Daʿwah, 1983), p.28.
18. The *hanīf* (singular or *hunafa'*) is one who naturally rejects polytheism and idolatry while inclined towards acceptance of *tawhīd*. In the *Qur'anic* context, the *hanīf* refers particularly to those who followed the faith of Ibrahim as well as those who accepted *tawhīd* during the *Jahiliyyah* period. After the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, the term acquired a more circumscribed meaning – one who follows the *dīn* of Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace. Dr. Dasuqi cites Zaid ibn ʿAmr ibn Nufayl and Qais ibn Saʿada as examples of *hunafa'* in pre-Islamic times. A more well-known *hanīf* was Waraqa ibn Nawfal, the cousin of the Prophet's wife, Khadijah.
19. Don Cupitt, *The Nature of Man*, (London: Sheldon Press, 1979), pp. 33-34.
20. *Ibid*, p.35.

CHAPTER 2

The Interpretation of *Fiṭrah*

The central *ḥadīth* quoted in Chapter 1 contains the term *fiṭrah* which refers to a concept which cannot be clearly and concisely defined or circumscribed; there is no single, precise meaning for it in English. Any attempt to elucidate it will necessarily involve some subjective interpretation even though such an analysis stems from authentic classical Islamic scholarship and is based on the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*. The *ḥadīth* is open to variant interpretations, even by many classical scholars. What follows is an examination of the distinctive perspectives of this concept. In so doing it is important to illustrate the differences between the four major interpretations of *fiṭrah* very clearly if we are to accept each as a distinct view. It is also important to elucidate the views of individual scholars very clearly if we are to classify each as an adherent of one of the four interpretations. The primary objectives of this chapter are as follows:

1. to clarify the four interpretations of *fiṭrah* as expounded by classical, neo-classical and modern scholars.
2. to provide a general critical evaluation of the four interpretations with a view to isolating a preferred interpretation.

3. to compare specific elements of the neutral, dual and positive interpretations of *fiṭrah*.

1. CLASSICAL VIEWS OF FIṬRAH

We attempt to clarify three classical views of *fiṭrah*: the predestinarian, the neutral and the positive views. Ibn Mubārak and al-Jaylani represent the predestinarian view, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr the neutral view, and Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Imām an-Nawawī, al-Qurtubī, and ar-Raghib al-Iṣfahānī the positive view of *fiṭrah*.

Shortly before the 9th century the Qadarite school came into being, in response to the Jabarites. The Qādarites are also known as the libertarians and they questioned the predestinarian views of the Jabarites, hence the beginnings of the neutral view of the *fiṭrah*. Ibn Qayyim (d. 751 A.H.) ascribes these differences in interpretation of *fiṭrah* to the different positions of various scholars on the freedom-determinism continuum.¹ The positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* represents the collective voice of most of the eminent classical scholars who have said anything substantial about human nature. They are not exclusively concerned with objective conditions which shape inner human reality (dualism) or with the polemics of the freedom-determinism problem (neutralism). Their positive view is on man as a dynamic reality, integrated with a universal principle of single-naturedness.

1.1 THE PREDESTINARIAN VIEW

This meaning of *fiṭrah* was originally held by scholars during a period before the middle of the 8th century, and its based on the doctrine of predestination as understood by Jahm ibn Ṣafwan, who

tried to show that there is no difference between things that happen in the world in general and the actions of human beings; all of them being continuously and directly created by Allāh.² These scholars were known as the Jabarites, of which school Ibn Mubāarak (d. 181 A.H.) appears to have been an adherent. This predestinarian view is also held by the Sufi scholar, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī (d. 561 A.H.). The predestinarians regarded the determinism of cause and effect in creation as applicable to human actions as well; just as Allāh created the world and the laws of nature, He created all the actions of man. Thus, both right and wrong actions are part of His creation. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir further maintained that even a wrongdoer would enter heaven if such be his predetermined fate, because, despite the magnitude and extent of his wrongdoing, he will, by Allāh's decree, do enough good to guarantee a place in Paradise.³

The implications of such views for Ibn Mubāarak's interpretation of *fiṭrah*, especially, is decisive: each individual is, by Divine decree, either good or evil by nature, whether such a decree occurs arbitrarily or in accordance with the Divine plan. Ibn Mubāarak interprets the *ḥadīth* that the children of polytheists are born either in a state of *kufr* or *iman*. According to Abu Mansur, this *ḥadīth* appeared before the revelation of the *fara'id* (obligations of Islam), and refers to the Divine decree before the birth of the child. Ishaq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Handhali confirmed this view on the basis that Abu Ḥurairah recited verse 30: 30, which pertains to the un-changing nature of Allāh's creation, after relating the *ḥadīth*. Furthermore, this un-changing nature refers

to the human creatures who have been created for the Fire or the Garden when they came from the loins of Adam. This statement, according to Ibn Mansur, refers to the nature of the creation which is according to *īmān* (faith). Al-Azhari, in his support of Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, states that the un-changing nature of *fitrah* is with respect to a person's destiny of the Garden or the Fire.⁴ Thus, irrespective of the external agents of guidance or misguidance, the individual is bound by Allāh's will to live out the 'blueprint' of his life which was designed for him in pre-existence.

A similar idea of pre-existential determinism was held by a much earlier Sufi scholar, Sahl at-Tustari (d. 238 A.H./896 C.E.), whose pre-existential man represents a typically Sufic explanation for the creation of man. Nevertheless, although it has a predetermined view of creation it is more in keeping with the positive interpretation of *fitrah*, and it will be dealt with under that section.

1.2 THE NEUTRAL VIEW

The neutral view of human nature emerged after the middle of the 8th century (C.E.) in response to the predestinarian views of human destiny. The theological polemics, which followed the predestinarians, was mainly a reaction from libertarian scholars who sought to question the validity of predestinarian assumptions.⁵

The most representative scholar holding this neutral view was Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 362 A.H.) who replied to the views of Ibn Mubārak. The latter's view of human nature was deterministic in the extreme: in accordance with the will and the fore-

knowledge of Allāh, each individual is destined for either happiness or misery. Hence, the believer will be born in a state of Islam while the unbeliever will be born in a state of *kufr*.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr questioned the validity of this interpretation: the central *ḥadīth* refers to parents as an external influence on the child affecting his state of *īmān* or *kufr*, whereas Ibn Mubārak regards *īmān* or *kufr* as a function of Divine decree. Neutralist scholars aver that *fiṭrah* is neither a state of intrinsic *īmān*, nor a state of intrinsic *kufr*. The child is born in a wholesome state, a blank state as it were, with no cognition of *īmān* or *kufr*; belief or unbelief become manifest only when the child attains maturity (*taklīf*).⁶ The acquisition of belief or unbelief at birth presupposes, according to Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, the predestinarian view of immutable *kufr* or *īmān*, which he rejected. He supported his position with the following Qurʾanic *āyah*:

'And Allāh brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, knowing nothing ...'
(Qur'an 16: 78).

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr regarded this state of 'knowing nothing' at birth as a wholesome, 'blank state' condition, a state of completeness, but devoid of any good or evil essence. Only a grown child at the stage of *taklīf* is capable of *īmān* or *kufr*.⁷ Furthermore, this view of the wholesomeness of man at birth concurs with the similitude in the central *ḥadīth* of the animal born intact. Muslim parents may help develop the *īmān* of the child by implementing Islamic teachings or they may neglect these teachings, creating the potential for the adoption of *kufr* by the

child during maturity. Similarly, non-Muslim parents' children are born in a wholesome state; the children become unbelievers during maturity only when they accept the un-Islamic teachings of their parents.⁸ Consequently, after the onset of maturity, the individual is legally accountable for his deeds only and not for any innate state which may predispose him to certain patterns of behaviour. Allāh says in the Qur'an:

'You will only be rewarded for what you do.'
(Qur'an 37: 99)

'Every soul will be held in pledge for its own deeds.'
(Qur'an 74: 38)

'We never punish until We have sent a messenger.'
(Qur'an 17: 15)

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr insisted that these *āyat* refer to deeds done after *taklif* (maturity), done with the full knowledge of their import and their consequences (in terms of the external agents of guidance and misguidance). The latter *āyah* especially underscores the importance of conscious human choice and free-will as an *a priori* of man's fate, whether ill or blessed. The compelling conclusion of this scholar is that man is born in a state of ignorance and innocence, acquires knowledge of right and wrong from the external environment only and makes conscious choices about which stimuli he will accept and which he will reject in order to attain the pleasure of Allāh. Although Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr did not make

explicit the importance of external sources of guidance, it is quite obvious that the role of such guidance can never be over-emphasised. Considering that there are no innate forces within man to guide him, external guidance then becomes absolutely decisive in terms of the neutralist perspective.

The neutral view, thus, lays great emphasis on the free-will of man because it was primarily a response to views which tended towards absolute Divine predestinarianism. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr is one scholar of *fiṭrah* whose interpretation of it can be classified as clearly neutral.

1.3 THE POSITIVE VIEW

Within the context of the opening *ḥadīth* many classical scholars argue that *fiṭrah* is a state of intrinsic goodness, and it is this view which constitutes the positive interpretation of *fiṭrah*.

1.3.1 Ibn Taymiyyah

According to Ibn Taymiyyah every child is born in a state of *fiṭrah*; in a state of innate goodness, and it is the social environment which causes the individual to deviate from this state. There is a natural correspondence between human nature and Islam; man is suited for *Dīn al-Islam* and responds spontaneously to its teachings. *Dīn al-Islam* provides the ideal conditions for sustaining and developing man's innate qualities.⁹ Man's nature has inherently within it more than simply knowledge of Allāh, but a love of Him and the will to practise the religion (*dīn*) sincerely as a true *ḥanīf*. This points to the element of the individual will, a pro-active drive which purposefully seeks to realise Islamic beliefs and prac-

tices. Ibn Taymiyyah responded to Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's notion of *fiṭrah* and argued that it is not merely a dormant potential which should be awakened from without, but rather the source of awakening itself, within the individual. The *ḥanīf* is not the one who reacts to sources of guidance, but one who is already guided and seeks to establish it consciously in practice.¹⁰ The central *ḥadīth* refers to a change which may be effected by the social environment; Ibn Taymiyyah maintained that this change is one from a given state, a positive state of Islam, to Judaism, Christianity, Magianism, etc. The social environment may also guide the individual to *iman* and good conduct so that the motivation in him to do good may be expressed, aided by external sources of guidance.¹¹ Ibn Taymiyyah was of the view that the human soul possesses an innate receptive capacity and a need for Islamic guidance while *Dīn al-Islam* is an adequate stimulus for this capacity and a sufficient fulfillment of this need.

Moreover, if sources of external misguidance are absent, the *fiṭrah* of the individual will be actualised involuntarily and good will prevail.¹² In support of this view, Ibn Taymiyyah cited Abu Ḥurā'irah's reference to the central Qur'anic *ayah* (30: 30) after the latter's quoting the central *ḥadīth*.¹³ In other words, whenever Abu Ḥurā'irah, may Allāh be pleased with him, reported the central *ḥadīth*, he used to recite after it the following Qur'anic *ayah*:

'Set your face to the din in sincerity (ḥanīfan: as a hanīf) which is Allāh's fiṭrah (the nature made by Allāh) upon which He created mankind (faṭara'n-nas). There is no changing the creation

of Allāh. That is the right *dīn* but most people know not.'

(Qur'an 30: 30)

Abu Ḥuraīrah's citation of this *āyah* after the *ḥadīth* apparently means that the *fiṭrah* of the *ḥadīth* refers to the *fiṭrah* of the Qur'anic *āyah*, which is a good *fiṭrah* because the right *dīn* is being described as Allāh's *fiṭrah*. The logic of this argument is that Abu Ḥuraīrah, may Allāh be pleased with him, meant that *fiṭrah* is associated with Islam (al-Qurtubi, 1967). And according to Ibn Taymiyyah it is the social circumstances, as represented by the parents, which causes the child to be a Jew, a Christian or a Magian.

Since the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, did not mention the parents changing the child from a state of *fiṭrah* to a state of Islam, we must suppose that the child's state at birth is in harmony with Islam, in the widest sense of submission to Allāh (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1981). Another implication of this view of *fiṭrah* is that, while good constitutes the inner state of a person's nature, evil is something that happens after the person is born. That is to say, deviation after birth is due to the corrupting influence of the social environment.

Ibn Qayyim (d. 751 A.H.), a disciple of Ibn Taymiyyah, held similar views on the positive interpretation. He did not regard *fiṭrah* as mere knowledge of right and wrong at birth but as an active, inborn love and acknowledgement of Allāh which reaffirms His Lordship. He also explained that Qur'an 16: 78 ('And Allāh brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, knowing nothing ...') does

not refer to innate knowledge of Allāh or Islam, but rather to knowledge of the particulars of religion in general which is why the latter type of knowledge is absent at birth. Moreover, *fiṭrah* is not merely the capacity or readiness to receive Islam, in which such a condition can be unfulfilled when parents choose Judaism or Christianity as the child's religion; Ibn Qayyim argued that *fiṭrah* is truly an inborn predisposition to acknowledge Allāh, *tawḥīd* and *dīn al-Islam*.¹⁴

Imam an-Nawawī (d. 676 A.H./1277 C.E.), a Shafi'i *faqih* who wrote one of the principal commentaries on *Saḥiḥ Muslim*, defined *fiṭrah* as the unconfirmed state of *īmān* before the individual consciously affirms his belief. We have already alluded to this positive view of *fiṭrah* and the implications it has for children whose parents are polytheists.

Al-Qurtubi (d. 671 A.H.) supported the positive view of *fiṭrah* by using the analogy of the physically unblemished animals in the central *ḥadīth* to illustrate that, just as animals are born intact, so are humans born with the flawless capacity to accept the truth; and, just as the animal may be injured and scarred, so can *fiṭrah* be corrupted or altered by external sources of misguidance.

1.3.2 Sahl at-Tustari (d. 283 A.H./896 C.E.) a Sufi Perspective

Fiṭrah, which is integral to man's soul, was created by Allāh so that man may acknowledge Him as the Lord Who has power over all things. *Tawḥīd* is integral to man's *fiṭrah* because Allāh, in His infinite wisdom, intended man to know Him as the One God. This is why man was able to acknowledge his Lord

before his existence on earth. This period before man was born into this world is called the pre-existential state of involuntary submission to Allāh and of acknowledging Him. Allāh, exalted is He, confirms this in the Noble Qur'an:

'When your Lord drew forth from the children of Adam from their loins their descendants, and made them witness concerning themselves (saying), "Am I not your Lord?" – they said, "Yes! We witness!"'

(Qur'an 7: 172)

Thus, in the above *āyah*, man, in his pre-existential state, acknowledges Allāh as his Lord. He has sealed a covenant with Allāh which he is expected to fulfill in his terrestrial career by worshipping Him. Sahl at-Tustari viewed pre-existential man as 'particles or specks endowed with intellects' and as 'embryonically enshrined in their prophetic prototypes'.¹⁵ He proceeded to examine the significance of pre-existential man's covenant with Allāh:

'Summoned with their prophetic prototypes to acknowledge Allāh's oneness and Lordship in the presence of the manifestation of His omnipotence, they enter into a covenant with Allāh by their affirmative answer to the question, "Am I not your Lord?" Their answer, "Yes! We witness!" to Allāh's address is engraved upon the intellect of man as a proof which reminds man of Allāh's Lordship. Although this primordial decision of man to affirm Allāh's Lordship in the face of this manifestation implicitly entails the original and ultimate destiny of man, it is to be verified and

tested in the period of Divine trial which is man's phenomenal existence in the world of creation.'¹⁶

At-Tustari further added that the 'self-consciousness of man derives from the moment of affirmation of Divine Lordship (*rububiyyah*) with their first profession of faith'.¹⁷

Thus, there is a difference between pre-existential submission and earthly submission; the latter condition is a conscious and willing practice whereas in the former case the submission is involuntary. The earthly submission involves the acceptance of Islam which complements man's inner nature:

'If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (al-Islam), it will not be accepted from him.'
(Qur'an 3: 85)

'Truly, the din in the sight of Allāh is Islam (al-Islam).'
(Qur'an 3: 19)

The Divine purpose and functional value of *fiṭrah* in man's pre-existential state also lies in its value as testimony against the polytheist and disbeliever who may plead ignorance or may claim, on the Day of Judgement, to have followed their forefathers. Allāh responds to this kind of argument as follows:

'(Of this We remind you) lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, "Truly, we were unaware of this", or lest you say, "Truly, it was our forefathers in times gone by who began to ascribe divinity to other beings besides Allāh, and we were only their offspring. Will You then destroy us for the doings of those inventors of falsehoods?"'

(Qur'an 7: 172-173)

The role of the prophets, then, is to remind people of *tawhīd* so that they might come to know their inner nature, their *fiṭrah*. 'So remind (O Prophet) you are only a reminder' (Qur'an 76: 29). At-Tustari affirms the role of prophets as prototypes 'like the seed of progeny in the loins of man' whose mission is to effect within man the recollection of his primordial perfection'.

Man must be faithful to his *fiṭrah* to qualify him for the *khilāfah*, the vicegerency of Allāh on earth. *Fitrah* can also be described as man's original state in pre-existence which he still possesses in his earthly career. Man in this original state is a microcosm of the Universal Man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*) who is a manifestation of the Logos, the Divine light in pre-existence. Earthly man is potentially a perfect *khalīfah*, a microcosm of the Universal Man. For man to be perfect and to have knowledge of Allāh he has to be faithful to his *fiṭrah*, and realise the Universal Man within him by emulating the Prophet Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, as spiritual prototype.

The Universal Man is in fact synonymous with the *Nur Muḥammad* (the light of Muḥammad) which is the primal manifestation of the Divine names and attributes in pre-existence. The whole of creation is derived from this light which illuminates it. The heart of Muhammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, which absorbed the Divine realities becomes the source of pre-existential man's knowledge and his love of Allāh. The light from the heart of Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him

peace, illuminates the hearts of men and the inaccessible light of Allāh becomes accessible through the light of the heart of Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace. Allāh, the Absolute Good, caused the light of the primordial good (Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace) from which issued the light of the goodness of pre-existential man. Existential man, in turn, retains the essential goodness of this light and it continues to illuminate his heart in the phenomenal world.

1.3.3 Ar-Raghib al-Isfahani – a Philosophical Perspective

We have already discussed the linguistic meaning of *fiṭrah* as described by al-Iṣfahānī in Chapter 1. *Fiṭrah*, according to al-Iṣfahānī, is associated with Arabic terms such as *tabīʿah*, which is a quality of the soul, and *sajjiyyah*, man's innate natural disposition which is unchanging, and exists at birth in all human beings.¹⁸

The human soul (*an-naḥs al-insāniyyah*), the locus of *fiṭrah*, is a treasure of wisdom and the sciences. The sciences, according to Iṣfahānī, which emerge from the soul, are analogous to fire emerging from the stone, the palm tree from the pit, and gold from the rock. Also, the acquisition of knowledge from the soul is analogous to the acquisition of water from the ground. Water can run naturally from the ground without human assistance, or, it can be drawn from the ground with the aid of buckets and ropes. However, water which is deep in the ground can only be drawn after much digging and human effort. If it was mean to be used it will be reached, otherwise it will remain unused within the

ground. Likewise, knowledge within the human souls can be attained without educational pursuit, such as the knowledge of the prophets which comes to them through the hierarchy of angels. Some people possess such knowledge through little education, but most people find it difficult to attain.

The *āyah*, *al-Aʿraf*, 172, affirms that it is Allāh Who sustains, nourishes, provides sustenance for and addresses man in his childhood.¹⁹ This is the affirmation of their souls embedded in their intellects. As for the affirmation of the tongue it did not take place with all of them:

'If you ask them who created them they will say, "Allāh."

(Qur'an *al-Aʿraf*: 87)

Āyah 30: 30 'So turn your face to the *din* in sincerity (*ḥanīf*an), the nature of Allāh upon which He has created man,' means that the monotheistic religion (*ad-dīn al-ḥanīf*) is the state upon which man has been created to know Allāh. But even if the obstinate ones intend to change the religion, and divert people from it, they will not be able to do so. And upon that Allāh states:

'(Our din) takes its hue (nature) from Allāh; who can give a better hue than Allāh?'

(Qur'an 2: 138)

'For such He has written iman in their hearts.'

(Qur'an 58: 22)

The Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, said:

*'Every newborn child is born in a state of *fitrah*.'*

Fitrata'llāh, the nature of Allāh, which is His *tawhīd* or Oneness, is the state out of which man's *fitrah* was created. That is to say, he is born with this innate knowledge and faith in the Oneness of Allāh. To be sure, Allāh has placed within the whole of mankind this inherent knowledge of Allāh while they were in a pre-existential state,²⁰ and this is affirmed by the following *ayah*:

'When your Lord drew forth from the children of Adam from their loins their descendants, and made them witness concerning themselves (saying), "Am I not your Lord?" – they said, "Yes! We witness!"'
(Qur'an 7: 172)

Like at-Tustari, al-Iṣfahānī draws upon this same verse to support the idea of man's pre-existential knowledge of Allāh. This is important for an understanding of how man attains to knowledge of Allāh in his earthly career. This idea is further supported by the Qur'anic *āyah* (*al-A'raf*, 87) quoted above, suggesting their acknowledgement of Allāh as their Creator. It is impossible for man to obliterate what is intrinsic to his deep-seated nature.

The *shahādah* (witnessing) of *ayah* 30: 30 refers to two types of people. First, those who are forgetful of the *shahādah*, but remember it afterwards, and realise its truth. Second, those who are negligent and indifferent to the *shahādah* they carry. *'And when they are reminded they do not remember'* (Qur'an 37: 13). They are in a state of ignorance; groping in darkness. Allāh says:

'And remember the favour of Allāh to you, and

His covenant, which He ratified with you.'
(Qur'an 5: 7)

'And We have made the Qur'an easy for remembrance: then is there any that will remember?'
(Qur'an 54: 17)

The Qur'an has been made easy for human understanding, and helps one remember the pre-existential covenant. According to al-Iṣḫānī, there are three ways of remembering, and one is through the human *fiṭrah*.²¹

Sages have said:

'In reality man does not acquire knowledge from outside, but discovers what is contained inside the soul; manifesting it clearly. It is like the digger who draws water from the ground, and the polisher who clears the mirror. That is clear to those who see with the eye of the intellect.'²²

Iṣḫānī refers to the general knowledge (*ma'rifah 'amiyyah*) of Allāh which is embedded in the human *fiṭrah*. This innate knowledge corresponds to the innate intellect which enables man to know Allāh to the extent that even the unmindful will be receptive to his *fiṭrah* and acknowledge Allāh, as confirmed by *surah* 31, *āyah* 25, referred to above.²³

This is precisely the knowledge of the pre-existential *fiṭrah* which remains with humankind throughout their terrestrial careers.

2. THE NEO-CLASSICAL VIEWS (POSITIVE INTERPRETATION)

Modern scholars who share in the classical positive interpretation of the *fiṭrah* may be called neo-

classical scholars. Some of them, however, differ with the question of the immutability of *fitrah*.

Muḥammad ‘Alī aṣ-Ṣābūnī, a contemporary scholar, derived his views on *fitrah* from the central *ḥadīth*. He asks whether religion is inborn and natural in man, and whether man is born with the spiritual capacity to do good. He refers to one of the principles laid down by the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, namely that good is intrinsic in man while evil is accidental. Man is naturally disposed to goodness and purity. However, social circumstances, particularly the parents can have a corrupting influence on the child’s *nafs* (self), *‘aql* (intellect) and *fitrah*. Aṣ-Ṣābūnī, like al-Qurtubī, regards *fitrah* as innate but corruptible. Without negative influences the child will grow up to remain true to his *fitrah*. Society exposes the child to error, misery and unbelief. As in the analogy of the wholesome animal, man himself deforms and disfigures that which is created beautiful and good. Aṣ-Ṣābūnī refers to the central Qur’anic *āyah* and argues that it is a rebuttal of those, especially Marxists and Communists, who deny *fitrah*.²⁴

Isma‘il al-Fārūqī (d. 1986) saw the love of all that is good and of the values which constitute the Divine will as implanted in man by Allāh. With reference to the central Qur’anic *āyah*, al-Faruqī viewed man as a creature endowed with a ‘unique faculty, the *sensus numinis*, with which all humans may acknowledge God as God, and recognise His commandments as the norms or ought-to-be’s of all that is’.²⁵ Innate knowledge of and obedience to Allāh is natural while disobedience is unnatural, though possible. Al-Fārūqī also regarded *fitrah* as corrupt-

ible by evil motives or passions. He referred to the corruption of the 'natural mechanism' in man; we can thus accept that the notion of a corruptible *fiṭrah* is more than just implicit in this statement.

According to al-ʿAttas, man's submission in pre-existence (Qur'an 7: 172) signifies his debt to Allāh as well as his utter state of loss so that he may repay his debt and return to Allāh by giving himself up in service to Him. This obligation is felt by man as a normal and natural inclination – *fiṭrah* – which al-ʿAttas equates with *din* by referring to 30: 30. *Fiṭrah* is the nature of submission in man and *din* is the pattern of submission for man. Conscious and willing submission establishes harmony and cosmos, while resistance to submission results in discord and chaos.²⁶

Shaykh Tantāwī Jawharī referred to the central *ḥadīth* and viewed man as born in a state of *iman* (faith). Also, the mind of man is like a *tabula rasa* (blank tablet), receptive to both good and evil stimuli, but is naturally predisposed to the reception of good stimuli. Evil is an external source of misguidance while good is a predominant tendency. In the absence of evil stimuli, man has the capacity to do good and recognise the oneness of Allāh.²⁷

Muḥammad Asad made reference to the central *ḥadīth*, the central Qur'anic *āyah* and Qur'an 7: 172. With regard to the first reference, Asad explained that man's 'instinctive cognition of God and self-surrender to Him'²⁸ is contrasted with the Jewish, Christian and Magian traditions. As such, in terms of the import of 30: 30, *fiṭrah* connotes an 'inborn, intuitive ability to discern between right and wrong, true and false, and thus to sense God's

existence and oneness'. Significantly, Muḥammad Asad maintained, though not quite explicitly, that *fiṭrah* is incorruptible since Allah will not 'allow any change to corrupt' what He has created. Muḥammad Asad underscored man's recurring submission, in his translation and commentary of 7: 172, referring to it as an 'instinctive cognition' and an 'existential response'.²⁹

Shāh Waliyullah (b. 1702 C.E.), an Indian scholar, articulated a positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* with a more holistic character: spiritual as well as biological man is intrinsically good. *Fiṭrah* is a more comprehensive concept, incorporating innate spiritual and physical tendencies which seek gratification in order to enhance and secure a wholesomeness in man's spiritual and physical constitution. It appears, if one should extrapolate a logical consequence of this notion, that the spiritual inclination is dictated by the innate state of purity, while the physical instinct is informed by the *sharī'ah* (an external source of guidance).³⁰

Mufti Muḥammad Shafī'i distinguished between *fiṭrah* as a concept synonymous with *dīn al-Islam* and *fiṭrah* as the readiness to accept Islam – the capability to recognise, acknowledge and obey Allāh. The Mufti accepted the latter interpretation, but adds that, in terms of Qur'an 30: 30, *fiṭrah* is immutable. He thus rejected the notion of a corruptible *fiṭrah* and explained that it can co-exist with *kufr* (disbelief or 'covering over'). The intrinsic state of *fiṭrah* remains an un-changing given while the extrinsic variable states of faith and conduct are mutable and dynamic.³¹

The positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* bears the

stamp of classical as well as modern orthodoxy, reflecting a wide consensus of scholastic perspectives. The uniformity of interpretation among these scholars, however, occurs primarily with respect to the universal principle of the intrinsic goodness of man. A closer examination of their writings reveals varying and even conflicting views between, as well as within, the broad classical and modern divisions. For example, the mutability/immutability problem, if I may refer to it as such, remains unresolved insofar as no scholar has convincingly argued for or against either pole of this dichotomy. It also appears that either classical scholars were less inclined to believe in the mutability of *fitrah* or that modern scholars articulated a more explicit belief in it.

3. MODERN VIEWS (DUAL INTERPRETATION)

This interpretation was developed during the twentieth century and is held mostly by modern Muslims who were actively engaged in the revolutionary trend among contemporary Islamic movements. The dynamic concept of life, as a struggle against injustice and oppression, provided a working foundation for this view of human nature.

It appears that this modern view is not strictly an intellectual concept which proposes certain theoretical formulations in orthodox Islamic teaching, but is a consequence of contemporary socio-political realities in Muslim nation-states. The exposition of this interpretation takes cognisance of these characteristics in the passages which follow.

3.1 Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966)

Sayyid Qutb was a member of *al-Ikhwān al-Mus-*

limīn, a movement led by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt devoted to the revival of Islamic faith and practice, moral and social reform, and resistance to the despotic leadership and governments of the day. Sayyid Qutb sought the transformation of Islam from 'a seeking an irrelevant, static, purely transcendental ideal' to 'an operative force actively at work on modern problems'.³²

In his world-view Qutb saw the role of contemporary society as dividing necessarily into either one of two classes: *nizām islāmī* (the true Islamic order) and *nizām jāhilī* (the rule of pre-Islamic ignorance). The former represents an objective manifestation of the ideological ideal while the latter represents a rejection of this ideal. Qutb regarded socialism, capitalism and communism as wrong by-products of *jāhilī* thought which should never be associated with the Islamic ideological ideal.³³

According to Sayyid Qutb, man, as a free being and decision-maker, is poised between that part of his nature which comprises the clay of the earth and tends towards *nizām jāhilī* and that part which comprises the Spirit from Allāh and tends towards the *nizām islāmī*. Between these two poles, man is admonished to strive simultaneously, by means of *jihād*, towards the ideal and against ignorance.³⁴ In his commentary on the Qur'an, Qutb's support for the dual interpretation of *fiṭrah* becomes evident, especially in respect of the following *āyat*:

'And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I am creating a mortal from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape; So when I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed of My

spirit (rūh) into him, kneel down and prostrate yourselves before him.”
(Qur'an 15: 28-29)

(The commentaries on the meaning of 'My spirit' include that Allāh mentions the *ruh* as belonging to Him particularly, as an honour for it, just as the Ka'bah is known as 'the House of Allāh', as an honour to it. All of the creation from the highest to the lowest is Allāh's creation and nothing shares in anyway with Allāh in His Divinity – Ed.)

'By a soul and He Who moulded it and inspired it with (knowledge of) its wickedness and its fearful obedience (taqwa), successful is the one who purified it, and ruined is the one who corrupts it.'
(Qur'an 91: 7-10)

'And We have guided him on the two paths.'
(Qur'an 90: 10)

Sayyid Qutb regarded these *āyat* as conclusive evidence for the creation of man with a dual nature and potential. The two essential constituents of the total human constitution, viz. the Spirit of Allāh and the clay of the earth, give rise to good and evil as two equal tendencies in man – the tendencies to follow Divine guidance or go astray.³⁵

In addition to this innate potential, Sayyid Qutb believed that man has a conscious faculty which enables him to distinguish good from evil. This faculty also determines his actions and makes him responsible for them. The one who uses his faculty to follow his innate inclination to good, to purify himself and to control the evil drive within him, will

be successful whereas the one who uses it to follow his evil self, will be in loss.³⁶ The conscious faculty is also designed to apprehend the external sources of guidance and misguidance which complement the good and evil tendencies. The good within man is complemented by external influences such as Prophethood and Divine Revelation while the evil in man is complemented by all forms of temptation and misguidance. Nevertheless, the function of the innate tendencies is decisive; external influences help only to complement the innate tendencies while the conscious faculty enables him to choose a certain path. Human nature is so constituted that not only has man been endowed with a dual nature and shown the 'two paths' as suggested by Sayyid Qutb in his commentaries on the *āyat* quoted above, but, consistent with this, he has been given his freedom to choose between them:³⁷

'And we have guided him (on) the way, be he grateful or ungrateful.'
(Qur'an 76: 3)

3.2. °Ali Shariati (d. 1977 C.E.)

°Ali Shariati studied history and philosophy at Mashhad and Paris, but he was essentially a sociologist, presenting an ideology of social, political and economic change based on his Islamic world view. His ideas were popular even in pre-revolutionary Iran and they continue to influence and inspire many revolutionary movements throughout the Muslim world. Shariati viewed the whole of history as a struggle between various pairs of opposite forces – truth and falsehood, monotheism and polythe-

ism, oppressed and oppressor, etc. According to Shariati, *tawhīd* (which sees the world as an empire, in his view) and *shirk* (which sees the world as a feudal system) respectively represent the ultimate thesis and antithesis of all existence.³⁸

However, his world-view did not constitute mere abstract concepts, but was rather to form the foundation for the resistance to historical and present-day *shirk* and the establishment of the eternal message of *tawhīd*. Furthermore, this historical dualism evident in objective reality is a manifestation of a parallel dualism in his view of human nature.³⁹

Shariati did not write translations of or commentaries on the relevant Qur'anic *āyat* which pertain to *fiṭrah*.⁴⁰ His views on human nature stem directly from his works, such as *On the Sociology of Islam*, although he does make use of some Qur'anic references on the subject. In the above work Shariati discusses the creation of man and the making of his state of being. Like Sayyid Qutb, he uses the Qur'anic analogy of the clay of the earth and the Spirit from Allāh. However, Shariati extends it further, creating a polarisation of the two phenomena as a precursory phase in his dialectic of the ultimate triumph of *tawhīd*. Clay, the lowliest symbol of baseness, is combined, in man, with the Spirit from Allāh Who is the Most Exalted. Man is thus a bi-dimensional creature with a dual nature, a compound of two, not only different, but opposing forces, one inclined to descend to material, sedimentary mud and the other inclined to ascend to the exalted Spirit of Allāh.

A further important component in this model is the free-will granted man and the trust offered to

man by Allāh. Free-will enables him to choose which pole he would incline towards and the trust burdens him with the responsibility of fulfilling the role of a worthy vicegerent of Allāh on earth.⁴¹ In a fairly lengthy treatment of the creation of man and the opposing poles of spirit and clay in man, Shariati goes on to describe their properties. Throughout this description he points out that the free-will and responsibility of man together with his dual constitution make him a dialectic reality, compelled to be always in motion and in a state of struggle. This idea of the struggle of man as a function of his being is further developed by Shariati: the principles of dialectic are applied to the philosophy of history and sociology. In this regard, he uses the Qur'anic and Biblical story of Cain (*Qābil* in Qur'an) and Abel (*Hābil*) as a metaphorical framework, depicting these two characters as two antithetical, opposing forces engaged in a struggle throughout history. Thus, in expounding his view of human nature, Shariati also develops theoretical premises for sociological processes in history.⁴²

He also attempts a comprehensive definition of the primal man:

'Man is a theomorphic being in exile, the combination of two opposites, the dialectical phenomenon composed of the opposition of "God-Satan" or "spirit-clay". He is a free-will, capable of fashioning his own destiny, responsible, committed; he accepts the unique trust of God, and receives the prostration of the angels, he is God's vice-regent on earth, but also rebels against Him . . . He is in constant struggle within himself, striv-

ing to rise from clay to God, to ascend, so that this animal made of mud and sediment can take on the characteristics of God.⁴³

Although one would generally prefer to regard the evolution of philosophy and religious thought in Islam as immune to the extraneous influences of other cultures, there are indications that some Muslim scholars have invariably drawn from non-Islamic, Western systems and theories. Humanism and Marxism are examples of Western value systems which have made at least a discernible impression on the thought and writings of Muslim thinkers. Similar trends will be referred to in more detail later in this chapter.

4. GENERAL EVALUATION

The extreme predestinarian view of the Jabarites is problematic because it makes nonsense of explicit Qur'anic statements on free-will and responsibility. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr reacted against their view and propounded the neutral view of *fitrah* which excludes the notion of a child being born in a state of good or evil. The neutral view possesses no element of innate knowledge, tendency or condition, and stresses the importance of the environment in the shaping of the individual's personality, character and behaviour. This idea of behaviour as exclusively contingent on stimuli is very akin to Skinner's behaviourism. A fundamental difference, however, is that Skinner's view is characterised by a radical determinism while Ibn 'Abd al-Barr formulated his view specifically to counter the predestinarian views of his predecessors. The irony is, of course, that

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, unlike Skinner, was a believer in human free-will.

The isolation of right and wrong, as exclusively extrinsic stimuli in the neutral view, lends an even greater significance to man as the decision-maker, the respondent to good and evil stimuli in the environment. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's reaction amounted to another extreme view which was, in turn, opposed by Ibn Taymiyyah, a representative of the positive interpretation, who maintained that *fiṭrah* is not a dormant potential, but rather an active tendency which constantly urges man to believe in Allāh and act according to His will.

The neutral view of *fiṭrah* posits that man is devoid of any innate predisposition. The implications of this view reflect on a God Who has created man out of nothing and Who has given him no sense of self-direction. The spirit of man has a Divine origin and the ultimate destiny of this spirit is again the Divine Essence. Thus, it is inconceivable that the soul engendered by the spirit of Allāh, breathed into existence by the Divine and destined to return to the Divine, inheres no trace of the mark of the Divine. *Dīn al-Islām* is the way perfected for man by Allāh and *fiṭrah* is the nature of man, created by Allāh, pointing to affinity and assonance between *din* and *fiṭrah*.

Not so in the neutral view; essentially, man is dissociated from *dīn* and any association is purely by means of objective perception of environmental stimuli. Conscience is absent at birth and is acquired by the individual only later in life. Neutralist man is guided only because he chooses to be guided, not because he possesses an inclination to be

guided. The guidance he does receive is exclusively external in origin – there is nothing within him that can motivate him to do any good. The measure of freedom in this view was to rid man of the shackles of predestinarianism, but its implication removed the affinity between man and his *dīn*, and between man and his Lord.

A further implication of this view is that those who did not receive guidance have no way in which to know Allāh – their destiny is uncertain. Will they be damned for being born ignorant or will they be forgiven for having lived in ignorance? The undue emphasis on freedom together with the notion of ontological ignorance (i.e. an original state of ignorance) make this view extremely problematic.

Ibn Taymiyyah, however, a representative of the positive view, believed that apart from environmental stimuli, which include the external sources of guidance and misguidance, there is also a singular, unidirectional tendency within man which prompts him to do good. He saw *dīn al-Islām* and *fiṭrah* in a dynamic and complementary relation to each other, while Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr viewed them as distinct entities. By implication, neutralist man may not necessarily attain Divine guidance in the absence of evil stimuli since he may simply choose not to be guided. On the other hand, positivist man is naturally guided in the absence of evil stimuli.

Ibn Qayyim held a similar view, but al-Qurṭubī differed significantly with regard to the notion of the preparedness for Islam, and the immutability of *fiṭrah*. In the positive view man is a dynamic, active participant in objective reality. His innate nature, i.e. his *fiṭrah*, is wholly and exclusively char-

acterised by goodness and is complemented by the external sources of guidance, namely, prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and the message (*risalah*). It is because of the pro-active nature of the goodness within him that positivist man is invariably in a state of conflict with the evils of the external sources of misguidance. Struggle is covertly integral to human nature because Allāh created man in a state of struggle (Qur'an 90: 4).

Socio-political realities are used by dualist scholars to describe human nature: inner human realities of man's being are a reflection of objective existential realities. The evil of the real world is represented by *shirk* and *an-nizām al-jāhili* while the good of the real world is represented by *tawhīd* and by *an-nizām al-islāmī*. In man, *fitrah* manifests a parallel kind of dualism. Given an intellect and a will, man is stationed between his innate good and evil and must now accept responsibility for tending towards either while he is admonished to fulfil his role as *khalifah* (see diagram 1).

This view poses two problems: firstly, if human nature is proposed as a consequence and a parallel manifestation of the nature of objective reality, then it makes nonsense of the creation of pre-existential man with innate tendencies, the assumption being that man is innately good and evil simply because good and evil are integral to reality. Neither Shariati nor Qutb explicitly make any such propositions, but their insistence on the association between the nature of socio-political struggle and the nature of man lends itself precisely to this kind of possible misinterpretation.

Secondly, good and evil, being counterpoised in

man, suggests that the parallel counter-position of good and evil in the real world represents God, the good, as the thesis; and Iblis, the evil, as the antithesis. While *shirk* and *tawhīd* may well be represented as opposite poles of the real world, Iblis can never be seen as the antithesis of Allāh; he is a creature of Allāh and can in no way be associated, compared or weighed up against Allāh. Any notion of establishing Iblis as the rival of God on earth is clearly covert, and possibly overt, *shirk* – and the dual view implicitly suggests this.

According to Sayyid Qutb, man will realise his true nature by means of *dīn al-Islām*. In terms of the dual view, this means that *dīn al-Islām* is a means of projecting man's innate nature, that is, both his innate good and his innate evil. Taking this argument a logical step further, one may conclude that Islam exhorts man to be both good and evil, which is obviously absurd. If man tends completely to the evil dimension of his bipolar nature, is it possible that the good in him may be completely overshadowed and corrupted? Shariati and Qutb did not address this problem and it remains uncertain whether either dimension has the potential to obscure if not to obliterate the other.

The Qur'an (91: 7-10) refers to the soul's knowledge of wickedness and fearful obedience (of Allāh) and to the destiny of those who keep it true and those who corrupt it. Sayyid Qutb drew on this verse to support his dual view, but his interpretation of the *ayah* is questionable because he ignored the significance of the word '*sawwa*' – 'moulded' and rendered an inaccurate translation of '*alhamā*' – 'inspired'.⁴⁴ *Sawwa* is a verb which denotes making

something uniform and in balanced proportion. Hence the noun '*sawiy*' refers to an upright person. In the context of 91: 7-10 this means that man's soul was created upright and well-balanced. Allāh then made man aware of, or endowed him with knowledge of, right and wrong – '*alhamā*' – which Sayyid Qutb incorrectly translated as 'to create a disposition, natural disposition or natural preparedness' for right and wrong.⁴⁵ This knowledge, significantly enough, is innate, not acquired, because Allāh swears by the soul which has knowledge in 91: 7 and the subject through to *āyah* 10 is consistently metaphysical. Sayyid Qutb appears to be in agreement with this when he refers to this condition as 'natural'. Innate knowledge of right and wrong is, in this case, not synonymous with an innate predisposition for right and wrong. The balanced and upright predisposition conveyed by '*sawwa*' and the knowledge of right and wrong suggested by '*alhamā*' are only nominally independent states, because the latter (i.e. the innate knowledge of right and wrong) complements the innate predisposition to right in man.

Sayyid Qutb also refers to Qur'an 90: 10 – '*And We have shown him the two paths*' – in support of his dual view.⁴⁶ Here again a closer examination of the *āyah* in its context suggests a markedly different interpretation. The two paths referred to in 90: 10 cannot be associated with those of the innate dualism of his theory. Rather they are the paths of right and wrong in objective reality or, as the 6 *āyat* which follow corroborate, the steep path of virtue and the easy path of vice. The *āyat* which precede *āyah* 10 also, inconsistency with the latter *āyat*, refer explicitly to aspects of

physical as opposed to metaphysical reality.

Both ^cAli Shariati and Sayyid Qutb refer to Qur'an 15: 28-29 as evidence of the creation of dualist man:

'And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I am creating a mortal from sounding clay, from black mud molded into shape; So when I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed of My spirit (ruh) into him, kneel down and prostrate yourselves before him."'

(Qur'an 15: 28-29).

These *āyat* describe the whole and complete constitution of man – physical and spiritual: matter is one constituent of man and is derived from the 'sounding clay', while spirit is the second constituent, derived from the Spirit of Allāh Himself. Matter or the 'clay' part of man is transient and its purpose is solely to provide man with the psyche or the carnal self and terrestrial garb by means of which he can fulfill his role as *khalīfah*.

As indicated in my interpretation of the central *ḥadīth* in Chapter 1, the human body and psyche are, at most, wholesome. In themselves they have no inherent right or wrong: they were created 'neutral' entities from a 'neutral' called clay. The carnal self (*nafs*) of man is naturally sensitive to stimuli from the environment and is susceptible to misguidance. This does not mean, of course, that the *nafs* is itself naturally evil; evil is separate and independent of man's psychic self. The conscious faculty of man can control the carnal self and guide him to the right. We have to accept that *fitrah* does not at all reside in the carnal or the psychic self: clay is strictly the material part of man's constitu-

tion and shares no part at all in the *fitrah*. The highest form of the *nafs* is the mind and the lowest form is matter, both of which are bound to perish. The spirit (*rūh*) is not bound to perish, but will return to its origin which is Allāh (Qur'an 96: 8). *Fitrah*, in its entirety, is vested in man's spirit and since Allāh has breathed of His Spirit into the clay to generate the spirit of man, *fitrah* itself must be good, because Allāh is good and the source of all good.

Having thus mentioned the true role and import of the psychic self (*nāfs*) and the spirit (*rūh*), the latent folly of a duality within the nature of man becomes obvious. As with the neutral view, it would be a contradiction of the attributes of Divine Justice and Mercy if Allāh made part of man's innate nature evil, bent on the destruction of good. The purpose of man is to worship Allāh, and Allāh Himself will guide man to that purpose; innate evil is completely at variance with this Divine plan.

The notion of struggle and action is intrinsic to the dualist conception of innate human nature or *fitrah*. This raises the question of the relevance of the positive view of *fitrah* for struggle and action in this world. Although there is no overt emphasis on action as in the dual view, it is by no means ignored in the positive view.

Classical as well as modern scholars of the latter interpretation have not articulated their views on man primarily in terms of the struggle against the evil forces of objective reality – probably because they were not personally affiliated to resistance movements bent on dismantling tyrannical governments of the day, nor were they inclined to assimilate dimensions of contemporary socio-political re-

alities into their concept of *fiṭrah*. This does raise the question of how and to what extent positivist man can or should address problems of social injustice. Given the extremely complex realities of the Muslims' struggle throughout the world, this remains, at best, an open question which cannot be adequately dealt with in a work of this nature. The subject of methodology in the life of Muslim *mujāhidūn* should best be left to the specialists in this area. Suffice it to say that action and contemplation are interdependent dimensions and integral components of a coherent whole in the concept of struggle in Islam. However, this struggle commences within man, with *al-jihād al-akbar* (the greater struggle) and is the precursor to the struggle against social injustice which is *al-jihād al-asghar* (the lesser struggle). Contemplation is both a precondition and an inseparable part of action; the one is meaningless without the other.

5. A COMPARISON OF SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE DUAL, NEUTRAL AND POSITIVE VIEWS OF FITRAH

The comparison of the three interpretations, which here follows, reveals similarities and differences. The three major interpretations of *fiṭrah* are the dual, the neutral and the positive interpretations. Why three interpretations and why specifically these three interpretations? The answer to his question relates to the problem of classification of the various views of human nature as well as suitable designations for these views. Because the obvious extremism and impractical implications of the predestinarian view, with respect to human respon-

sibility, it will not be included in the comparison of specific elements of *fiṭrah*. In any case it has too little in common with the other three interpretations of *fiṭrah* to be included in the comparison.

Although the views of no two scholars can be said to be identical in every respect, there are certain common principles which underlie their interpretations of Qur'anic *āyat* and passages from the *ḥadīth*. A salient criterion for distinguishing one view from the other is the extent to which both right and wrong are (individually or collectively) represented as either innate or as external influences from the environment. Another criterion is the role played by prophethood, revelation, and right and wrong as external agents of guidance and misguidance respectively. This classification is also evaluative in the sense that it denotes the degree to which 'good' as a characteristic of human nature is represented in each interpretation. For example, the neutral view represents both right and wrong as external agents of guidance and misguidance, and is predisposed to neither, which is why it is designated as such. The view which regards man as essentially good, and evil as exclusively an external agent of misguidance is optimistic, hence it is called the positive view. Scholars who posit that man has both good and evil innate tendencies may appropriately be called adherents of the dual interpretation of *fiṭrah*. The table opposite illustrates how good and evil are represented by the three interpretations as innate and/or external influences of guidance and misguidance.

The foregoing exposition reveals some interest-

Interpretations of Fitrah

	DUAL		
	with preparedness for both iman and kufr	in a state of ignorance and innocence – no iman or kufr.	in a state of iman and islam with a potential for kufr.
1. Born			
2. Predisposition	equal innate pre-disposition to both right and wrong.	no innate pre-disposition to right or wrong – man a blank state.	innately pre-disposed to know Allah and to do right.
3. Evil	an external agent of mis-guidance which complements the innate evil in man.	an external agent of mis-guidance	an external agent of mis-guidance.
4. Prophethood and Revelation	external Divine agents of guidance which complement the good in man.	external Divine agents of guidance.	external Divine agents of guidance which complement the innate predisposition.

Table Showing a Horizontal Comparison of the Three Interpretations of Fitrah

ing similarities and differences between the three interpretations. However, a comparison of the various elements of the interpretations may be undertaken not for the sake of comparison in itself, but rather to show how each reflects an essential unity in their conception of human nature while manifesting differences in terms of certain unique properties peculiar to particular interpretation. The elements compared below are significant because they define the orientation and parameters of their respective interpretations. Although there is no specified method of comparison, an inherent logic renders the discussion of successive elements systematic and intelligible.

A HORIZONTAL COMPARISON

(of the table on page 71)

1. represents the innate state of a new-born child.
2. represents the extent to which good and/or evil is/are innate or environmental influences which determine human nature.
3. represents evil as an external agent of misguidance.
4. represents prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and revelation (*risālah*) as the external agents of Divine guidance.

The table on page 71 illustrates a clear difference between the three interpretations with regard to innate predisposition: both the dual and the positive views include innate predisposition as an active element of the human metaphysical constitution, but with a difference in degree. In the dual view, both good and evil are equally innate while in the posi-

tive view only good is innate. In the neutral view nothing is innate – man is born without any inclination, rendering him totally susceptible to environmental influences, be they good or evil. Neutralist man acquires an Islamic conscience in life while positivists and dualists are born with it, although the latter's conscience may be obscured by the co-existing innate evil.

Because he has no inclination or conscience, neutralist man is born ignorant of both good and evil, but also innocent in that he is totally sinless. The equal innate tendencies of good and evil in dualism may render him susceptible to equal good and evil influences while positivist man is born in a state of *iman* and submission to Allāh with the potential to commit evil by means of his free-will and intellect.

Prophethood and revelation serve as external agents of Divine guidance which naturally complement the innate good in man, in the dual and the positivist interpretations. In the neutral view, prophethood and revelation are also agents of Divine guidance, but they manifest as independent entities. Similarly, in both neutral and positive interpretations, evil is an independent external source of misguidance while, in the dual interpretation, external, evil stimuli complement the innate evil in man.

6. COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF VARIOUS SCHOLARS

Our first comparison is within the dual view, that is, between the views of Sayyid Qutb and ʿAli Shariati. Since both scholars were dualists, one can assume that they regarded good and evil as equally innate in man: they viewed the evil in man as a

force to be countered with innate human goodness. Their means was *jihād* and their object the conquest of the despotic rulerships of the day. However, Shariati developed the theory of his argument into a dialectic of opposing forces in a perpetual state of struggle, while Sayyid Qutb deliberately steered clear of such theoretical formulations. In theoretical terms, Sayyid Qutb saw good and evil as represented by *an-niẓām al-islāmī* and *an-niẓām al-jāhili* respectively – Shariati by *shirk* and *tawhīd*. Both scholars accepted free-will as a Divinely ordained aspect of human nature. Owing to his notion of the dialectical process of history, Shariati's dualist man is irrevocably destined for the struggle between *shirk* and *tawhīd*. Nevertheless, the individual, at any point in time, has the freedom to choose between right and wrong. Sayyid Qutb regarded man as a being, poised between Divine and Satanic forces, who, with the aid of the external sources of guidance, should strive for the realisation of *an-niẓām al-islāmī* and the conquest of *an-niẓām al-jāhili*. The concept of struggle, i.e. *al-jihād al-āsgḥār*, is integral to the dual view of *fiṭrah* because the scholars who held these views addressed the political realities of the day and thus saw the need to view man as a being in a continuous state of struggle. In the positive view, this struggle is by no means undervalued; the positivist scholars did not address the struggle of man primarily in terms of socio-political realities, but rather in terms of his own self, i.e. *al-jihād al-ākḇār*.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr is the only neutralist scholar discussed in this work. Unlike the positive and dualist views, the neutral view possesses no element of in-

nate knowledge, tendency or condition. The role of learning and the environment thus play a fundamental role in the shaping of the individual's personality, character and behaviour. The idea of behaviour as exclusively contingent on environmental stimuli is very akin to Skinner's⁴¹ behaviourism. A fundamental difference is that Skinner's view is characterised by a radical determinism while Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr formulated his view specifically to counter the predestinarian views of his predecessors. The irony is that Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, unlike Skinner, was a believer in human free-will. The isolation of right and wrong as exclusively extrinsic stimuli in the neutral view lends an even greater significance to man as the decision-maker, the respondent to good or evil stimuli in the environment – more so than in the dual and the positive views.

Ibn Taymiyyah responded to Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's view of man: he maintained that *fiṭrah* is not a dormant potential, but rather an active tendency which constantly urges man to believe in Allāh and act according to His will. Ibn Taymiyyah believed that, apart from environmental stimuli which include the external sources of guidance and of misguidance, there is also a singular, unidirectional tendency within man which prompts him to do good. He saw *dīn al-Islām* and *fiṭrah* in a dynamic and complementary relation to each other, while Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr viewed them as distinct entities. By implication, neutralist man may not necessarily attain Divine guidance in the absence of evil stimuli since he may simply choose not to be guided. On the other hand, positivist man is naturally guided in the absence of wrong stimuli.

Ibn Qayyim held a similar view and argued that *fiṭrah*, as a mere state of knowledge, may mean an unfulfilled *fiṭrah* if the child is raised as a Jew or a Christian.

Al-Qurtubi's view is significantly different from those of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim insofar as he stops short of saying that *fiṭrah* is more than just a state of readiness or preparedness for Islam. The implication, of course, is that *fiṭrah* is not mutable. Although none of the classical scholars discussed in this work directly addressed the question of the mutability of *fiṭrah*, one can safely assume that they (with the possible exception of al-Qurtubi) accepted it as immutable. It is probable that they have understood *la tabdila li khalqillāh* '(There is) no changing the creation of Allāh' (Qur'an 30: 30) in the absolute sense, meaning that there shall be no change in Allāh's creation.

Both al-Tustari and al-Iṣfahānī held that *fiṭrah* is immutable because of its pre-existential reality and the implication that knowledge of Allāh is embedded in the human soul. Modern scholars, as-Sabuni and al-Faruqi clearly believe in *fiṭrah* as a mutable phenomenon. Asad and Mufti Shafi'i maintained that *fiṭrah* is immutable while al-Attās, Jawhari and Shāh Waliyūllāh have not addressed the issue in any way.

There appears to be a departure from the classical to the modern view. The later modern and contemporary view seems to indicate a return to the original classical belief in the immutability of *fiṭrah*.

Finally, there are salient features of Shāh Waliyūllāh and Muḥammad Shafi'i's views worthy of mention. Shāh Waliyūllāh's holistic conception

of human nature is unique in that he is the only scholar discussed in this paper who has incorporated a biological dimension to his interpretation of *fitrah*. None of the other scholars, even those of the dual and the neutral persuasions, saw any relation between the physical constitution and the innate nature of man. Muḥammad Shafī'i is the only scholar in this work who makes a distinction between *fitrah* as synonymous with *dīn al-Islām* and *fitrah* as a state of readiness to accept Islam. Both views form part of the positive interpretation and were already articulated by classical scholars like al-Qurtubi and al-Asqalani.

7. CONCLUSION

The three interpretations and the views of the various scholars presented above are all valid insofar as they are based on Islamic sources and value systems. The concept of *fitrah*, however, is not independent of man's creation, role and destiny: a notion of *fitrah* may thus be valid in that it is derived from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, but it may be invalidated or at least blemished by unsound assumptions. Because no single view of *fitrah* expounded in this work can be regarded as 'correct', it does not mean that a view which best accords with Qur'anic principles, the *Sunnah* and authentic Islamic scholarship cannot be developed. Similarly, views which disagree with the Islamic legacy cannot be totally rejected since they may adhere to fundamental principles of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

The general evaluation and the specific comparison above are an attempt to assess the validity of the classical, neo-classical and modern interpreta-

tions of *fiṭrah* as well as of the views of individual men of knowledge. The assessment itself is not an attempt to deride the views or the person of any scholar; as Muslims, each has contributed invaluablely to the Islamic legacy and this chapter serves only to evaluate their theories per se and their underlying assumptions.

Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim and Imām an-Nawawī have remained remarkably faithful to the traditional interpretations of the relevant passages on *fiṭrah* in the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*. Their views accord fully with those of other orthodox men of knowledge, and the excellence they themselves have achieved, in terms of both learning and fearful obedience of Allāh, has established them as figures of truly authoritative and authentic Islamic scholarship.

A demerit, albeit somewhat insignificant, of al-Qurtubī's view on *fiṭrah* is that the notion of man's receptive capacity to accept the truth was not carried a logical step further to conclude that the goodness of *fiṭrah* is the most dynamic, dominant and essential reality of man's innate nature.

Of the neo-classical scholars, however, Muḥammad Asad implicitly rejected the pre-existential *fiṭrah* as alluded to in Qur'an 7: 172, and insisted that it is an 'existential response' and that the covenant is an 'instinctive cognition' which recurs throughout man's earthly career. Ibn Kathir, Ibn Taymiyyah, at-Tustarī, at-Tabataba'ī, al-Iṣfahānī and virtually every scholar of Sufi persuasion agree that man's submission referred to in this *āyah* occurred in pre-existence.

Shah Waliyūllāh's proposition of a *fiṭrah* with a spiritual and a biological dimension poses certain

obvious problems. As pointed out above in this section, *fiṭrah* does not at all reside in the physical self which is at most wholesome at birth, but entirely corruptible by the lower *nafs*; evil physical instincts simply do not accord with a good spiritual essence. If *fiṭrah* in its entirety is bound to return to its origins, then it remains a mystery how corporeal man could be reconciled with eternal reality. The notion that biological man inheres *fiṭrah* is a fallacy because the physical self bears no essence; it is bound to become dust again and this earthly cyclic process is its only continuous dynamic.

This very question of the immutability of *fiṭrah* is a fundamental one and cannot be ignored in any study of human nature in Islam. As pointed out in the comparison section above, the classical scholars did not address this question probably because of the epistemological history of the concept of *fiṭrah*; they interpreted *la tabdila li khalqī'llāh* (Qur'an 30: 30) as '*there can be no changing the creation of Allāh,*' rather than, '*do not change the creation of Allāh!*' and simply understood that *fiṭrah* is immutable.

Among modern scholars, as-Sabuni and al-Faruqi both entertained the false notion of a corruptible *fiṭrah*. The former regarded parents and the wider social circumstances as agents of corruption which may alter *fiṭrah* while the latter referred to the corruption of the 'natural mechanism' in man by his evil motives and passions. Al-ʿAttas, Jawhari and Shah Waliyūllāh seemed not to have addressed this issue seriously enough.

The views of the above scholars serve to add to the rich diversity of the intellectual development of the Islamic legacy, and in this sense none of the

views discussed is irrelevant. Although unsound assumptions may invalidate a claim, they do not detract from the value of the scholar's contribution as a whole. No single scholar has produced a 'model' answer or interpretation of *fiṭrah* and this author is least inclined to do that. We have, nevertheless, attempted to present, differentiate, assimilate and integrate some of the representative views on *fiṭrah* and to derive from them a view, namely the positive view, which hopefully best accords with the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*. The positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* is intrinsic to the Muslim mind and reflects on credible realities of Allāh, the universe and on man and his role on earth. The latter reality especially, that is, man's role as *kḥalifāh* and *ʿabd* (slave) on earth, is under the indomitable and pervasive influence of *fiṭrah* as an existential reality which permeates the metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, volitional and legal dimensions of human existence.

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4. Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab al-Muht*, Vol.IV. ed. A. al-'Alayali, (Daru Lisan al-'Arab, Beirut, 1988) p. 1109.
5. H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 602. Scholars of the predestinarian school emphasised Divine power instead of free-will, while the libertarians emphasised Divine justice in defence of free-will. The latter maintained that there can be no Divine justice without human free-will.
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20. Ibid. pp. 226-227.
21. Isfahani, *al-Dharkah*, op.cit., pp. 227-228. One can remember by one's tongue which affirms what is in the heart; by the remembrance of one's heart of something of the past, present and future received in the form of sight, insight, or the senses; and remembrance in the form of what is contained in the human *fitrah*.
22. Ibid., p. 228.
23. Al-Isfahani, *Tafsil al-Nashatayn wa Tahsil al-Saʿadatayn*, ed. A.M. Najjar, (Beirut 1988) pp. 199-200.
24. Muhammad ʿAli Sabuni, *Mtn Kunuz al-Sunnah*, (Damascus: Maktabul Ghazali, 1981), p. 13.
25. Ismaʿil al-Faruqi, 'Islam as Culture and Civilization', in *Islam and Contemporary Society*, Ed. Salem Azzam, (London and New York: Longman and Islamic Council of Europe, 1982), p. 154.
26. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future*, (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1985), pp. 32, 57-59.
27. Tantawi Jawhari, *Tafstr al-Jawahir*, (Egypt: Mustafa al-Babi al Halabi, 1350 A.H.), Vol. 15, p. 75.
28. Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qurʾan*, (Gibraltar: Dar al Andalus, 1980), pp. 230, 621. Asad implicitly denies man's submission to Allah in 7: 172 as a pre-existential event.
29. Ibid., p. 230.
30. Shah Waliullah, *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*, (Uttar Pradesh, India, no date), Vol. 1, p. 394.
31. Muhammad Shafiʿ, *Maʿarif al-Qurʾan*, (Karachi: Darul Maʿarif, 1976), p. 734.
32. Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 157.
33. Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 151.
34. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, (Durban: Taj Company, no date), p. 46. cf. Sayyid Qutb, (Beirut: *Maʿalim Fi al-Tariq*, Darul-

- Shuruq, 1980), p. 43.
35. Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, (Darul-Shuruq, 1979), Vol. 6, p. 3917. See also, Qutb, Vol. 3, pp. 1392-4; 1400.
36. Ibid., p. 3918.
37. Ibid., p. 3917.
38. Ali Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, trans. by H. Algar, (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), pp. 13-27. See also Ali Shariati, *Man and Islam*, trans. F. Marjanli, (Houston: Filinc, 1981), pp. vi-xiv.
39. Ibid., pp. 29-31.
40. Enayat, op.cit., p. 157.
41. Shariati, op.cit., pp. 37-77.
42. Ibid., pp. 87-110.
43. Ibid., pp. 95-98.
44. *alhamā* (the fourth form of the root verb *lahtma*) is explained by Lane to mean directing someone or putting something into someone's mind. It is clear that *alhamā* refers to making someone aware of something through inspiration or suggestion (*ilham*). See E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1984).
45. Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, Vol. 6, p. 3917.
46. Ibid., p. 3917.

CHAPTER 3

The Implications of *Fitrah*

Thus far I have attempted a definition and an interpretation of the concept of *fitrah*. The latter was an exposition, comparison and evaluation of the views of various scholars. In the evaluation of the dual and neutral views, I have given some indication as to the impracticable and theoretically untenable implications of these views. The positive view remains the ideal theoretical model for the prognosis of the implications of *fitrah*.

Fitrah relates to man's innate reality but it also means something for his beliefs, values and attitudes to life, his world-view and his interaction with his environment. *Fitrah* cannot be viewed in isolation from man's mind, conduct and institutions in the phenomenal world.

In this chapter I will examine the essential link between *fitrah* and the metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, psychological and legal aspects of man's existence; there is, perforce, a relation between innate human nature and life itself.

Fitrah means something for the above aspects of life, and I will attempt to analyse their implications in terms of the Islamic world-view. Although Chapters 1 and 2 are somewhat theoretical and abstract, I hope that this chapter will render the concept of *fitrah* more meaningful and intelligible.

1. THE METAPHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS OF FITRAH

The ideal point of departure for an understanding of *fiṭrah* is the metaphysical principle that underlies the concept. By means of this principle we come to understand the place of man in the universe, his essential spiritual nature and his ultimate destiny. It is this principle which provides the foundation for the Islamic creed and from which all other true beliefs and value systems are derived. Accordingly, all other implications of *fiṭrah* are rooted in this metaphysical principle.

Man is born with an innate inclination to believe in and to worship Allāh. The implication is that the principle of *tawḥīd* is integral to the inborn nature of man. The mission of all the prophets from Adam to Muḥammad, peace be upon them all, was to convey the message of *tawḥīd*. This message implies that man believes in and submits to Allāh, the One God. It is a monotheistic message intended for man to actualise his *fiṭrah*, which means bringing to life the original *fiṭrah* of man. Conscious verbal affirmation of the *shahadah* makes a person a Muslim and it begins the reconciliation with his original inbuilt faith in Allāh (*tawḥīd*). Since *tawḥīd* is integral to *fiṭrah*, it is the principle which governs its metaphysical implications.

Man is a 'central being' in the world because he has been honoured with the vicegerency of Allāh on earth (*khilāfatu'llāh*). To qualify him for this position, he was taught the 'names' of all things, which means as well that he was given power and dominion over them. All creatures reflect some aspect of the Divine, but man, in his full nature as the 'mani-

festation of His names and qualities',¹ is the only being that can reflect all the Divine names and attributes. The centrality of man's being and existence is a fact, a given, an unchangeable reality which man must accept. However, his right to dominate over the earth as *khālīfāh*, is justified only if he remains in perfect submission to Allāh, the absolute Master of nature. In addition to the function of *khālīfāh* man was given the quality of being *‘abd*, a slave, the state of being in perfect submission to Allāh.

At the core of man's being is his primordial nature which he possessed before his 'fall' to earth and which he still carries deep within himself. In this original state of *fitrah*, man is potentially the perfect *khālīfāh*. It is due to his forgetfulness of his *fitrah* that man is prone to exploit the power and privilege, afforded him through his capacity for *khilafāh*, for his own selfish ends. The powers of intellect and will, which were given to man on account of his status as *khālīfāh* of Allāh, have been employed by man for wrong and destructive purposes, precisely because he neglected his role as *‘abd*, or slave, of Allāh. It is only through submission as slave of Allāh that man will be able to use his privilege and power over nature in a positive and spiritually progressive way.

Man is always in need of Divine Revelation and grace from Allāh. Man may not take heed of the Divine Revelation which reminds him of his primordial nature. Although he may deviate from the dictates of his nature, which is a manifestation of the names and attributes, yet he cannot fully escape from what he is, and his essential nature must

manifest itself on the periphery. No matter what man attempts to do in life, be it removed from the demands of his *fiṭrah* or in accordance with them, he cannot escape the spiritual nature of his being. Man is born with the inborn inclination to believe in and worship Allāh. The central and primary motive is manifested unconsciously. It is man's duty to become conscious of this primary motivating force, that influences his behaviour. Even if man is outwardly inclined to worship idols, or a person, or a political system, he is still motivated by this inner drive to know Allāh. The only difference is that while the believer knows that he is motivated to know Allāh, the unbeliever does not. It is in this sense that the central nature of man manifests itself on the periphery.

The primordial character of man's nature is affirmed by reference to the covenant between man in his pre-existential state, that is, before the creation of the world, and Allāh. Allāh says in the Qur'an:

'When your Lord drew forth from the children of Adam, from their loins their descendants, and made them witness concerning themselves (saying), "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes. We witness."'
(Qur'an 7: 172)

In this affirmation lies the secret of man's destiny, for man, above all the creation, accepted the burden of trust:

'Truly, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains and they refused to bear it and were afraid of it and man assumed it.'
(Qur'an 33: 72)

This acceptance of the trust is precisely the acceptance of the vicegerency of Allāh on earth. This trust also implies the acceptance of freedom, and of responsibilities to both Allāh and His creation. The rights and responsibilities of man are clearly defined by Islam. This is because Islam means submission to Allāh. It is necessary for man to live in submission to Him, for it will ultimately save him from all deviations and spiritual abnormalities and bring him back to his original state, his state of *fiṭrah* or the state of submission to the One, Allāh.

In terms of the metaphysical principle of *tawḥīd* referred to above, man's return to his original state of *fiṭrah* can be done by accepting and affirming the *shahadah* (the witnessing – *la ilāha illa'llāh, Muḥammadur rasūl Allāh* – There is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh). Acceptance of the *shahādāh* means a conscious acknowledgement of Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, as the ideal exemplar, the spiritual prototype who is to be emulated in the journey to the origin, the Absolute. In Chapter 2, the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, was referred to as the Universal Man (*al-insan al-kamil*) – the spiritual prototype of all creation.

In Sayyid Hossein Nasr's words:

'Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, is the Universal Man par excellence and also the quintessence of all that is positive in cosmic manifestation. The Universal Man contains all degrees of existence within himself and is the archetype of both the cosmos and man.'

There is a profound metaphysical correspondence

between man and the cosmos. Outwardly man is a microcosm of the cosmos; inwardly, he represents that reality which is the source of the cosmos itself. This is why it is possible even for fallen man, or the man who has deviated from his primordial nature through forgetfulness, to have power over nature. In the light of this view Nasr comments:

'The spiritual man, although outwardly dominated by nature, inwardly rules over things most of all because he has conquered his own inner nature. Might one not add that today, when man boasts most about conquering nature, the reverse process has taken place, namely an apparent and outward conquest of nature combined with complete lack of asceticism, spiritual discipline and self-negation, which make man more than ever a prisoner of his own passions and who is the reflection of the Universal man and its realisation is the pole towards which the Universe itself is attracted.'

The Universal man represents the sum of all the degrees of existence, a 'total mirror before the Divine presence and at the same time the supreme archetype of creation'. This is the prototype of man, a reality contained in the being of every man. This reality may be established by every man provided that he aspires to it in the spirit of trust and faith (*imān*). With Divine assistance, man realises the total potential of his *fiṭrah*, and hence, becomes fully conscious of his true self, in order to gain the happiness and peace that he seeks in this world and in the Hereafter.⁶

Man, from the viewpoint of his primordial nature,

is asked to perform the 'priestly' function himself, and hence we find no priesthood in Islam. Islam, as a natural religion, removes the distinction between the religious and the secular, or the sacred and the profane, 'making man a natural being who is yet, the most direct symbol of the spiritual world in nature, and in direct contact with the world'.⁷

Because of the Islamic understanding of the way human beings are placed in creation, the spiritual dimension of *fiṭrah* is vitally important. It is this spiritual aspect of human nature which is ignored by Western psychology which regards the biological and psychical dimensions as the only relevant variables of the discipline. Islam recognises a third, namely, the spiritual dimension (*rūh*) which is distinct from the psychical (*nāfs*) aspect of man.

Since *tawhīd* is intrinsic to *fiṭrah*, man naturally turns to belief in and worship of Allāh. This spiritual impulse in man is rooted in the very essence of human nature which the Qur'an refers to as *ruh*. The *rūh* may be translated into English as 'spirit' and it is also often referred to as 'soul'. It represents the incorruptible and immutable transcendental essence and should be distinguished from the *nāfs* (psyche) which is the constantly changing aspect of man. *Nāfs* is the negative tendency in man which is capable of rebellion against Allāh and which should be trained and disciplined so that it may become re-united with *rūh*.

At the heart of man's inclination to recognise and worship the One God is the spirit (*rūh*) which Allāh has breathed into man, qualifying him for the noble status of *khālīfāh* or vicegerent of Allāh on earth. This role, He entrusted to man because of his po-

tential superiority over the rest of creation and so Allāh commanded the angels to bow down to Adam, peace be upon him:

'And when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit (min ruhi) then fall down before him prostrate.'

(Qur'an 15: 29)

It is the Spirit which Allāh breathed into man that enables him to enjoy a greater affinity to God than the rest of creation. Man alone is able to imbue himself with the attributes of Allāh, albeit in a limited sense. The soul (*rūh*) is the very essence of human nature. The reality of *fiṭrah* implies the reality of the soul which is predisposed to the recognition of and submission to the One, Allāh. The realisation of the *fiṭrah* means the reunion of the self (*nāfs*) with the human soul (*rūh*). It is man's responsibility to realise his essential spiritual nature, for in this realisation lies the knowledge of Allāh, as suggested by the saying: 'He who knows himself, knows his Lord'.

The highest level of spiritual development is referred to in the Qur'an as *an-nāfs al-mutma'innāh* 'the self made tranquil', when man's entire being is in total harmony with his *fiṭrah* and when the principle of *tawḥīd* is manifested in his total submission to Allāh.

2. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL IMPLICATION OF FITRAH

(The Implications of *Fiṭrah* for the Bases of Knowledge)
Since man's innate inclination is to worship Allāh and to obey His commands, it follows that the

Islamic way of life is best suited to his nature and is essential for his inner peace and happiness.

Guidance for the Islamic way of life is communicated in its final form in the Qur'anic revelation. Allāh would not be known to man as god if He had not endowed man with the faculties by means of which he is able to understand Divine Revelation or the organs of spiritual perception with which he may recognise his Creator. Apart from revelation as an objective source of knowledge and guidance, Allāh has given man the organ of cognition, known as the heart (*qalb*), which is the locus of the intellect (*‘aql*). This organ enables man to comprehend the highest source of knowledge, namely, Divine Revelation, and to perceive at the highest level of human perception. Man is capable of perception from the lowest sensory perception to the highest spiritual perception.

To facilitate the understanding of the three levels of human perception, and the relationship of the various elements associated with the three levels, a table is presented below. This will also hopefully help in clarifying my use of terminology. It is to be noted that *‘aql* is capable of both spiritual and intellectual perception, and that the mind is associated with intellectual perception of a discursive nature. The mind is capable of reasoning which is a projection of the *‘aql* on the mental plane. A distinction is made between reason, which is an expression of the mind, and intellection, which is an expression of *‘aql*.

As can be noted from the table opposite, Islamic epistemology recognises all levels of perception in man in contrast to Western psychology which rec-

LEVEL OF PERCEPTION	PERCEPTUAL PROCESS	FACULTY/MEDIUM
1. SENSORY PERCEPTION	sight, hearing, and smell, etc.	eyes, ears and other senses.
2. RATIONAL PERCEPTION	cognition, reasoning, and insight, etc.	<i>‘aql</i> mind
3. SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION	intuition, intellection, and inspiration.	<i>‘aql</i> heart

ognises only sensory and intellectual perception. Moreover, these three levels of perception are clearly distinguished, although my table shows that they can also be interrelated at different levels. The objectives of each of these levels of perception are associated with certain levels of knowledge and of reality. Through the senses, we acquire knowledge of the physical environment, e.g. knowledge of the biosphere. Through the mind, we acquire analytical and synthetic knowledge, knowledge acquired through reasoning alone, which includes knowledge of metaphysical and abstract phenomena, e.g. the concept of justice, or the concept of God. The 'heart knowledge' or knowledge of the intellect (*ʿaql*) involves the experience of spiritual realities, e.g. elevation of the self, or attaining the presence of Allāh. All these levels of knowledge are 'true' and 'real'. Truth-falsehood is a scale on which all perceptions of all our faculties may find a place. While Islamic epistemology recognises all these levels of perception and realities as constituting legitimate knowledge, it further recognises a hierarchy of knowledge, the lowest level being the level of sensory perception, and the highest level being spiritual perception.⁸

The basis of Islamic epistemology is revelation; however, this does not mean that man's reason and intellect do not play a role. In contrast to the *Murṭāzilāh*⁹ who assigned priority to reason, I am of the view that the correct Islamic position is to assign priority to revelation. Nor do I agree with the view that revelation is equivalent to reason. Revelation is from Allāh and is objective and eternal, but reason stems from man and is necessarily subject-

tive and transient. Reason may help man to interpret and explain revelation, but because of its limitations, must remain subordinate to it. Intellect, as the faculty of spiritual perception, however, transcends the limitations of discursive reasoning when it is guided by experience based on Divine Revelation. The intellect inherently has a greater affinity to Divine Revelation than reason and so the latter is necessarily subject to the intellect.

Man's nature (*fitrah*) and his relationship with Allāh, as *khālīfāh* and *ʿabd*, cannot be fully understood without an understanding of the meanings of intellect and reason. In our discussion of the heart and the intellect (*ʿaql*) we have discovered that man is capable of the highest level of consciousness, that is consciousness and perception of spiritual realities. This perception of spiritual reality is possible only through an understanding of the role of the *ʿaql* which is higher than the level of discursive reasoning. A clear distinction should be made between reason and intellect. Reason is limited to the function of analysis and logic. This is indicated by the Latin root of rational – 'ratio' – revealing the activities of analysis and division. Intellect (*ʿaql*) transcends this limitation; its function is to know the principles of things. This will lead to the realisation of the Islamic teaching of unity (*tawhīd*) if it functions normally. The role of revelation is to remove the impediments which prevent the intellect (*ʿaql*) from functioning in a wholesome manner. Reason is only a reflection of intellect. It should be made subservient to intellect. Reason, in its subservience to *ʿaql* and revelation, will serve as a positive instrument in guiding man in his journey from mul-

tiplicity to unity.

Man is a relative being. Because he is subject to the phenomenal world of multiplicity, he has been endowed with revelation and intellect. They enable him to perceive beyond the world of multiplicity and to become liberated from that world through his journey to the unity of the One Absolute, Allāh, Who stands in contrast to the multiplicity apparent in His Creation. Thus, for man to become liberated from the state of multiplicity, he will have to come to know Allāh Who is the source of his existence. If reason rebels against its own origin, against both the intellect and revelation, then it becomes the source of disharmony and disorientation.¹⁰

Man is able to use objective revelation to bring the subjective intellect into operation. The intellect can be operationalised through a wholesome employment of reason submissive to both the intellect and revelation. In this way, reason may occasionally cause 'intellection'. We say 'occasionally', for man cannot always produce intellection. And this intellection is not a consequence of man's efforts alone; everything depends on Divine grace and mercy. Intellection is 'heart-knowledge' rather than discursive reasoning. The individual is able to see with the eye of the heart (*ʿayn al-qalb*). He has knowledge, with certainty, of spiritual realities. This does not mean that the individual has, at this stage, reached full integration between the lower and higher *nāfs*, for good intent precedes this movement towards intellect. Man's psyche (*nāfs*), his will, and reason must conform to Divine Revelation for intellect to be fully functional or reach its full potential.

This is the epistemological implication of *fitrah*.

Through the organ of the heart, its faculty of intellect, and the guidance of Divine Revelation, man is able to attain all levels of perception, even the knowledge of Allāh in a direct and immediate way. The epistemological implication of *fiṭrah* recognises the function of spiritual consciousness, realised through the organs of the heart and intellect so that man may fully embody his roles as *khālīfāh* and *‘abd* on earth.

3. THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF FIṬRAH

The nature of man's *fiṭrah* is that he is naturally inclined to recognise his Creator and worship Him. This worship involves submission to the Divine Will, including His ethical injunctions. It is a fulfilment of man's Divinely ordained purpose in life. Right action is natural to man and is in harmony with his *fiṭrah*. Allāh has previously implanted in man the love of good, the love of the values which are the constituents of Divine Will.¹¹ To know and to submit to Divine commandments is natural to man, and the violation of these commandments is a deviation from inborn human nature.

Man's worship of his Creator is not confined to belief and formal prayer to Allāh, but includes ethical conduct as well. Allāh instructs and prohibits in matters relating to food and drink, marital relationships, social justice, etc. Man's true nature is one of intrinsic goodness, and so he is expected to conform to the Divine laws that will guide him to good conduct. This in turn will strengthen his original nature and make him more inclined towards values demanded of his nature. Islam is designed to develop a mental state within man which will

make the values of truth, honesty, brotherly feelings, etc. dear to his heart and the opposite qualities, dishonesty, hypocrisy, etc. abhorrent to him. When, in the Qur'an, Allāh addresses the companions of the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, He, exalted is He, says:

'Allāh has endeared to you belief, and made it appear graceful to your hearts; and He has made detestable to you unbelief, ungodliness and disobedience.'

(Qur'an 49: 7-8)

By the grace of Allāh, the believers have developed and sensitised their selves (*nufus* plural of *nafs*) in harmony with their *fiṭrah* to such an extent that they find belief and right action endearing, and disbelief and wrong action abhorrent.

Moral excellence is a characteristic of human nature. We are easily able to recognise a morally excellent person and endeavour to emulate him or to attain a high moral standard ourselves. The reason for this easy recognition of and endeavour towards moral excellence is *fiṭrah*. Socrates was right in holding that all men possess a capacity for recognising moral excellence. We do occasionally recognise those things which are ultimately valuable when we are brought into contact with them, although we do not always recognise them, and often take things to be valuable which are not.

We cannot agree with the subjectivist theory of ethics which states that notions of value are self-invented; that the values of truth, beauty and goodness are projections of man outside himself. The recognition and pursuit of virtue is an innate qual-

ity in man, born out of his natural state of *fitrah*.

Virtue is an inborn quality and the learning of it is a rediscovery of what is already known. Man's soul has already acknowledged Allāh as his Lord in pre-existence (Qur'an 7: 172). Man's duty is to return to his original state, the state of *īmān* in which he was born. His acquisition of virtue is a recollection or a rediscovery of what was in reality within him. This learning process is explained by Socrates and Plato and is referred to as a sort of anamnesis, a recollection or remembrance (in Arabic *dhikr*). *Fitrah* is also implied in this theory of knowledge. Learning is a process by which the self becomes reacquainted with what it already knows, but has forgotten. Learning is apprehension of inborn knowledge.

Virtue, or knowledge of the right, may be considered both inborn and acquired. It is not inborn in the sense that it is the conscious possession of the child at birth, but in the sense that it is an inborn quality of the soul. Whether that quality is consciously realised depends on circumstances. Yet the virtue that results is not the creation of moral instruction and the right circumstances 'any more than the blossom on the plant in the conservatory is the creation of the conservatory. The blossom springs from the seed (*fitrah*) which was there in the first place; the conservatory provides the environment in which alone the seed can blossom.'¹²

Man's self develops and grows as a result of the learning that takes place in the environment, but, man's inborn inclination to do good may be directed towards mistaken ends. He may even err by taking for good that which really is not. Man may be born

good, but he is also created imperfect and weak (Qur'an 4: 28). He needs Divine Guidance, not to be perfect, but to live in harmony with his nature and to be happy. His nature requires that he believes in Allāh, and that he be grateful to Him and love Him.

Revelation guides man to the way of gratitude. This is done through worship which is the best means of: illuminating *fiṭrah* and keeping it alive, eradicating vices and inculcating in man the discipline for ethical conduct. Because man is innately inclined to virtue, healthy social circumstances are required in order to awaken this inherent virtue. The expression of virtue in a social context may be referred to as morality. The ethical dimension of this morality is thus derived from human nature itself, but it is also the consequence of social moral prescriptions. Moral prescriptions based on Divine Revelation accord with man's *fiṭrah* and give expression to the virtue within man. Man's *fiṭrah* contains an ethical dimension and is receptive of ethical prescriptions which are directed at developing a virtuous personality and character. When a person's conduct is in harmony with his inner nature, he is said to be spiritually and psychologically healthy.

Al-Ghazālī, may Allāh show mercy to him, has shown that when *'aql* gains supremacy over *nafs* (the negative physical tendency in man) man then acquires a variety of virtues (see 'Psychological Implications of Fitrah'). If forces of appetite and anger, or biological and emotional dimensions of man gain supremacy over the *'aql* through the instigation of *shayṭān*, then vices occur. In order for man to strengthen himself against the forces of *shayṭān*,

he needs right knowledge and action. Right knowledge involves faith in Allāh and in the Last Day, and knowledge of man's essential nature. Right conduct is obedience to the religious and ethical commandments of Allāh. Some virtues, according to al-Ghazālī, are means, such as patience, repentance, fear, and sincerity, etc. Others are means *and* ends, such as absolute reliance on Allāh and thankful praise of Him.¹³

We note that when the intellect (*‘aql*) has complete control over the *nafs*, the individual attains the highest level of psycho-spiritual development, *an-nafs al-mutma'innāh* – the soul made tranquil, with all its excellences. This is possible only when the intellect is guided by knowledge based on Divine Revelation. This knowledge will be discussed in further detail in the section on the intellectual relevance of *fiṭrah* (Chapter 4).

What follows is a discussion of the psychical dimension of *fiṭrah* (i.e. in the *nafs*), the adverse stimuli which impinge upon it, in the form of biological and emotional impulses, and the need for their control as a precondition for the actualisation of *fiṭrah*.

4. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATION OF FITRAH

Although man is born in a state of *fiṭrah*, he also has the potential for wrong. In order to actualise his *fiṭrah*, man needs to gain control over this potential for wrong within himself. Wrongdoing, *kufr* (rejection of *tawhīd*) and breaking the Divine law, are all part of the Divine scheme of Creation; their functions are important and decisive for man. Allāh

has endowed man with the inborn capacity to distinguish right from wrong. Through intellect, free-will and revelation he can be guided to choose what is right and lawful and thus reawaken this recognition in him. Although man is not born evil he is vulnerable to evil stimuli or external sources of misguidance. This property of the human constitution, to be vulnerable to wrong, is intrinsic to man and is referred to as the psyche or the self (*nafs*) of man.

The emotional and biological impulses of man are not inherently evil, but are readily susceptible to evil stimuli. They need to be controlled and directed in accordance with Divinely prescribed laws so that the *nafs* can be transformed into the highest level of spiritual achievement – *an-nafs al-mutma'innāh*.

The individual who has attained a higher spiritual consciousness has passed through three broad levels of psycho-spiritual growth. The Qur'an uses the term *nafs* to denote the psychic dimension (or the self) of man. It is a dynamic entity which, if properly trained, can develop to the highest stage of spiritual awareness and, ultimately, harmony with the *rūh*.

The lowest level of the psycho-spiritual state of the *nafs* is *an-nafs al-ammārāh* – the commanding self. This state is the negative psychic force in man, the seat of his egoistic and selfish drives. It may be contrasted with the *qalb*, the *rūh* and the *'aql*, which represent the spiritual drive in man, always seeking the presence of Allāh. *Nafs* has a negative character in the Qur'an through being called '*an-nafs al-ammārāh bi's-su*'¹⁴ (the self commanding evil), whereas *rūh* is viewed as the Divine Spirit breathed into man. This aspect of the *nafs* is referred to as

the lower *nafs*, which at-Tustari grouped under four main headings:¹⁵

(i) The selfish desire of the *nafs*: it desires its own pleasures through its inborn lust (*shahwāh*) and passion (*hawa'*).

(ii) The autonomous claim of the *nafs*: it claims its own self-centred power (*hawā*) and strength (*quwwāh*) and follows its own planning (*tadbīr*) without regard for Allāh's guidance.

(iii) The antagonistic temper of the *nafs*: it tempts man to act in accordance with his natural inclinations for both restless movement (*harakah*) and listless passivity (*sukun*), in opposition to Allāh's command (*amr*) and prohibition (*nahy*).

(iv) The *nafs* as man's enemy and *shaytān*'s companion: it is the worst enemy (*‘aduw*) of man and associates itself with *shaytān* by taking heed of the whispering (*waswasāh*).

An-nafs al-lawwamāh (the reproachful self: see Qur'an 75: 2) is the first major step in psycho-spiritual growth. It is the inner guide that directs man to the truth, and stands mid-way between the negative tendency of *an-nafs al-ammārāh* and the positive tendencies of *rūh* and *‘aql*. At this stage, the slightest departure from the straight path arouses in the believer the pains of conscience.

Unlike the commanding self, the reproachful self does not totally submit to carnal desire and whims. The motive force of the reproachful self is fulfilled when it reaches the final stage of psycho-spiritual growth, *an-nafs al-mutma'innāh* (the contented self). At this latter stage the individual is totally liberated from the carnal self and attains the highest level of spiritual balance. *Nafs* now adopts the characteris-

tics of *rūh*, with which it is united in a state of complete psycho-spiritual harmony.

The psychological or psychical implications of *fitrah* are associated with the *nafs*. Since the emotions and desires form an integral part of the *nafs* of man, the psychological implications are directly related to its emotional dimensions. Both the emotional and the psychological dimensions of man have positive as well as negative tendencies. If man's emotions are controlled and directed to higher spiritual ends, then his psychical nature is disciplined. Although the biological constitution of man is completely different from his psychological constitution, the former nevertheless serves as an instrument for the drives of the psyche. The self must be trained so that it may be integrated with the spirit. The lower level of the *nafs* must be transformed into a positive, spiritually higher state so that the individual may be liberated from bondage to the lower *nafs*, for it tends towards gratification of the biological and emotional needs of the individual and away from the service of Allāh.

Two primary qualities of the *nafs* are passion and anger. All other negative drives are derived from these two. Passion instinctively tends to weigh the individual down with an inertia of complacency and indulgence, while, at the same time, it is expressive and pulsates with its own energy, dispersing waves of its activity beyond itself. Anger is an emotion bent on glorification, arrogance and domination. Its energy serves to stifle its own dynamic and confines free emotional expression to forceful self-justification. These attributes suggest an ambivalence in human emotional states: they have positive as well

as negative tendencies. They are, nonetheless, integral to the soul. Passion may appeal to the individual's sense of charisma, make him of a pleasant disposition and produce in him a sense of serenity. Anger may serve the function of self-preservation, seek to resist falsehood and to establish harmony where there is discord.

However, one must maintain balance in the degree to which these drives influence the thought and behaviour of the individual. A lack of such drives may prove harmful for the soul and body, while an excess of them may harm the individual's intellect and faith. Indeed, the refinement and discipline of the *nafs* consist in restoring the qualities of anger and passion to a state of balance, in order to avoid descent into bestial animal states and to prevent the emergence of other blameworthy qualities. Regarding the way in which one can maintain this state of balance, Najm ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (654 A.H./1256 C.E.) said:

'In obedience to the law (*sharī'ah*), man should earnestly fear Allāh, and not strive to seek dispensation, for the Law and the fear of Allāh are a balance which maintain the attributes in a state of equilibrium, preventing some from prevailing over others. Disequilibrium would be in a state of animals and beasts of prey, for in animals the attribute of passion prevails over that of anger, and in beasts of prey the attribute of anger prevails over that of passion. Of necessity, animals are given to greed and lust, and beasts of prey to conquest, wrath, and dominance, to killing and hunting.'¹⁶

According to Najm ad-Dīn ar-Rāzi, Allāh does not intend the 'alchemy of the Law' to eliminate blameworthy qualities, for that would result in deficient spiritual and and physical well-being; herein lies the folly of those philosophers who sought to completely eliminate anger, passion and lust. Instead, the property of the Law and the alchemy of the *dīn* are to restore each of these qualities to a state of balance in the soul so that they may be exercised in accordance with the *sharī'ah*. Thereby they cause praiseworthy qualities to emerge from within the self. The paradoxical nature of these drives is that their energy, after being transformed so as to manifest its potential for good, can elevate the individual to the highest level, *an-nafs al-mutma'innāh*.

With regard to the transformation of the lower elements of the self, we again consider the drive of anger and examine the distinction between the 'holy anger' of the saintly man and the gross anger of the profane man. The fearfully obedient believer is one who has actualised his *fiṭrah*, by transforming it from its original state within his being to an embodiment in reality. The influence of the actualised *fiṭrah* pervades and suffuses all experience, all thought and all behaviour. Although anger, for example, derives its energy from itself, the fearfully obedient and conscientious individual expresses it with the direction and immutable Divine quality of guidance of *fiṭrah*. Whether consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously, the individual, by his anger, seeks only to fulfil his actualised *fiṭrah* and to resist evil and establish good. Note here the connection between the emotional experience and *fiṭrah*; by means of this connection the transformation of

the believer's anger takes place.

The profane man, on the other hand, experiences profane anger. His *fitrah* is only in his being ; it is not actualised in his behaviour. The relationship between his *fitrah* and his emotional experience is, at best, fleeting or, at worst, non-existent; there is no real or substantial connection. The *fitrah* of the profane man remains a dormant potential, untapped by his conscious will, while with his anger he may seek gratification for his own sake, for selfish, cowardly or unjust motives. Consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously, he has not allowed his *fitrah* to orientate, direct and express his anger in an Islamic manner.

Socially, anger plays a vital role in the manifestation of the believer's spiritual consciousness. The following *ḥadīth* testifies to this:

'Whoever of you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith.'¹⁷

The above *ḥadīth* refers to the conduct of the believer who experiences holy anger with respect to unjust social conditions or wrongdoing, for example. Holy passion, like holy anger, is sanctified by the individual's *fitrah*. The natural energy of passion, under the guidance of *fitrah*, teaches the fearfully obedient believer the difference between attachment to the Creator and His Divine guidance, and attachment to all circumstances, events and things. He acknowledges and appreciates all that is relative, mortal and transient, as the creation of the

Creator; nothing can detract from or diminish his admiration and appreciation of such things in the physical world, for this is, after all, relative to the Absolute. Real passion, however, in all its intensity of energy, is invested in the Absolute Itself. On the other hand, gross worldly passion is, in the extreme, ignorant of the fleeting nature and relativity of physical reality. At times profane man doubts even his own physical mortality. In his frame of reference, the Creator is relative or does not feature at all; God is a consequence of or a means to his intense and unconquerable attachment to this world. The energy of his passion drowns his potential for re-awakening, in inertia and it vibrates with activity bent on greed, lust and the like. Profane passion is not transformed and sanctified by *fiṭrah*, but holy passion is, and the latter seeks expression through spiritual values.

Al-Ghazālī's picture of dynamic interaction shows how the elements of anger and appetite, when controlled and transmuted with the aid of the *ʿaql*, are able to transform the lower *nafs*s into the higher levels of psycho-spiritual development, and in so doing actualise the state of *fiṭrah*. Although the soul and body are separate entities, they affect each other. Al-Ghazālī maintains that every act produces an effect on the soul, if it is done deliberately and repeatedly. As physical action influences the soul, so the soul influences the body. This is known as the 'traditional interaction theory'. An act creates an effect on the soul; this effect causes the body to repeat the same act which again produces an effect on the soul. The resultant effect is added to the previous effect produced.¹⁸

Before I can discuss al-Ghazālī's interaction picture, which deals with the dynamics of the self, I need to introduce the faculties of the self in relation to the human constitution. Most Muslim philosophers accepted Plato's view that the soul consists of three qualities. Al-Ghazālī introduced a fourth quality, the quality of justice, the function of which is to maintain a balance between the other qualities of anger, appetite and reason. The quality of anger is referred to in Qur'an and *hadith* as a passion (*hawa*). Appetite and passion are also referred to as *nafs* (the carnal self). Al-Ghazālī regarded these as the source of wrongdoing. Like Najm ad-Dīn ar-Razi, al-Ghazālī also maintained that passion has been created for the benefit of man, but that it serves a good purpose only when it is expressed within the prescribed limits which are determined by *ʿaql* and the *sharʿāh*. However, since *nafs* tends to exceed the limits because of its vulnerability to impulsive behaviour, it needs to be controlled and directed by the quality of justice, which is referred to by al-Ghazālī as the 'motive of religion' (*baʿith ad-dīn*).

These two motives of the *nafs*, the susceptibility to irrational impulses and the quality of justice, compete with each other in the self of every sane human being.¹⁹ The introduction of the quality of justice is important to al-Ghazālī as it has a bearing on his theory of root virtues, struggle with the self and moral responsibilities. The faculty of justice is not yet present in man before the age of discretion and he is not able to control his passion (*hawa*) and cannot choose to refrain from wrongdoing.

The four elements of *bahimiyyah*, *sabrīyyāh*, *rabbaniyyāh* and *shaytaniyyāh* respectively determine the natures and the extent of the forces of appetite, anger, intellect and *shaytan*. Individuals possess these powers in different proportions. A full appreciation of ar-Razi's and al-Ghazālī's views requires an analysis of the dynamic interaction of the forces of appetite and anger and of the satanic and angelic elements in man, (cf. diagram P which may prove useful in understanding the dynamic nature of man's *nafs* and its discipline and transmutation into higher spiritual levels).

‘*Aql* and *shaytaniyyāh* are opposing forces of the soul that work through *shāhwāh* (appetite) and *ghadab* (anger) towards constructive and destructive purposes. The animal forces of anger and appetite are instigated by *shaytaniyyāh* to revolt against ‘*aql* and to conquer it. ‘*Aql*, on the other hand, because of its inherent angelic element, seeks to control these animal forces and divert them through proper channels in order to make them useful to the soul. If ‘*aql* succeeds in subjugating them, the satanic influence on man is weakened and rendered ineffective, and a state of harmony conducive to the realisation of God prevails. The tendency towards wrongdoing is subdued and the animal forces are harmonised, which permits the soul to pursue its goal without interruption. It is this state of peace and harmony in the soul which is referred to in the Qur'an as *an-nafs al-mutma'innāh*.

However, if the animal forces are instigated by *shaytaniyyāh*, they rebel against ‘*aql* and conquer it, strengthening the wrong influence on man until it has complete control over the ‘*aql*, thus weaken-

ing the angelic element in man. All the other faculties then become subservient to *shaytān*; and reason becomes the slave of anger, passion and lust. The wrongdoing tendency becomes stronger, with a correspondingly increased desire for self-gratification through the physical expression of wrongdoing at the expense of the good of the soul. *Shaytān* devises means for the satisfaction of these wrong needs. When this tendency reaches its maximum potential it becomes the active principle in *an-nafs al-ammārah*, the lowest level of spiritual development.

Nevertheless, the angelic element opposes these animal forces and is seldom totally subdued. It is when the angelic element of the soul is engaged in this kind of struggle that it is referred to by the Qur'an as the admonishing or reproachful soul – *an-nafs al-lawwāmāh*.²⁰

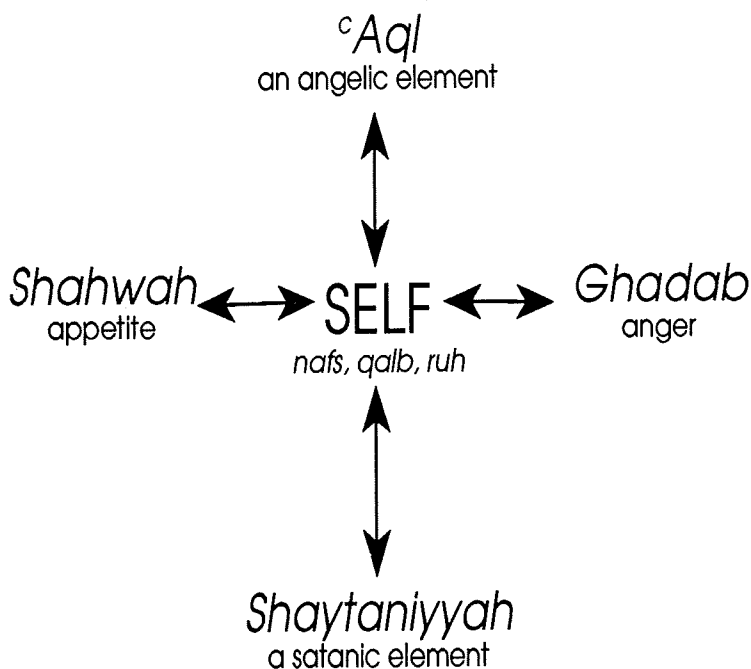
These conditions of the soul represent the spiritual consequences of the interaction of these elements. A balance of power is maintained when anger and appetite are controlled by *‘aql*. The equilibrium of the three phases of the soul's development produces ethical consequences that are conducive to the realisation of the ideal. If *shahwāh*, for example, is controlled and expressed in moderation, qualities such as chastity, contentment, tranquility, fearful obedience (of Allāh), cheerfulness and modesty emerge. If *ghadab* is controlled, qualities such as courage, generosity, fortitude, endurance and forgiveness emerge. If both *shahwah* and *ghadab* are subordinated to the angelic element, qualities such as knowledge, wisdom, faith and certainty develop. However, if *shahwah* dominates, the pro-

gress of the soul towards its goal is affected; bestial characteristics such as greed, gluttony, wickedness, hypocrisy and jealousy then emerge. If *ghadab* dominates, characteristics of ferocious animals such as enmity, hatred, contempt, pride and love of self-aggrandisement are acquired. If the angelic element transcends its limits then qualities such as claiming lordship (*rububiyyāh*), despotism and making claims to special privilege are displayed.²¹

Man stands midway between animals and angels and his unique characteristic is intelligence – ‘*aql*.

DIAGRAM P

Al-Ghazali's Theory of Dynamic Interaction



Degrees of Dominance over and Subservience to the Animal Forces of Anger and Appetite

LEVELS OF PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT	ANGELIC ELEMENT ‘AQL	SATANIC ELEMENT SHAYTANIYYAH
an-nafs al-ammarah	subservience	dominant
an-nafs al-lawwamah	partial subservience	partially subservient
an-nafs al-mutma'innah	dominance	subservient

He can rise to the level of the angels with the help of the intellect or stoop to the level of the animals by permitting his anger and lust to dominate him. The foregoing psychological analysis makes it clear that Allāh has created all bodily organs and faculties of the self to help man realise his *fitrah*. However, al-Ghazālī emphasised that the realisation of *fitrah* can be achieved only when the intellect has been fully applied. Thorough knowledge is, to al-Ghazālī, a prerequisite for the application of the intellect. The nature of this knowledge, I treat separately in the section dealing with the intellectual relevance of *fitrah* in Chapter 4.

A discussion of the psychological implications of *fitrah* must also deal with its therapeutic relevance because the proper control and transformation of man's *nafs* is essential for psycho-spiritual health. Absence of control of the *nafs* and transformation results in psycho-spiritual imbalance. A detailed treatment of the therapeutic relevance of *fitrah* appears in Chapter 4.

5. THE VOLITIONAL IMPLICATION OF FITRAH

The concept of *fitrah* implies that man is created of a good and sound nature, capable of submission to Allāh and of living a moral and right-acting life. It also implies that man is free to actualise his original state of pure faith and uncorrupted character, or to deviate from this original state, if he consciously rebels against Allāh. The central *ḥadīth* clearly suggests the strong influence of the social circumstances. It also suggests that man has the freedom and capacity to determine social circumstances. Islamically, it becomes the duty of each

person to create circumstances which are conducive to the full actualisation of his *fitrah*. This responsibility extends beyond the individual to the family, the community and to governance.

There is abundant evidence in the Qur'an to suggest that man is a free being with the capacity to choose between right and wrong. The following *ayat* bear ample testimony to man's free will:

'We have truly guided him (on) the way, (be he) either grateful or ungrateful.'
(Qur'an 76: 3)

'The truth is from your Lord; so let him who will, believe and let him who will, disbelieve.'
(Qur'an 18: 29)

'But truly He is forgiving to whoever repents and believes and acts uprightly, and lets himself be guided.'
(Qur'an 20: 82)

Although right and wrong are predetermined tendencies in the scheme of creation, man is nevertheless compelled to make a choice by virtue of his God-given freedom. It is this capacity for choice and initiative which enables man to bring about change in himself or in his circumstances, for better or for worse, depending on whether he follows the guidance of the revelation or not.

'And there is nothing for man but what he strives for.'
(Qur'an 39: 53)

'Truly, Allāh does not change that which is with

a people until they change that which is within themselves.'

(Qur'an 13: 11)

The onus is on man to take the initiative to change himself. Allāh will change the condition of a people only if they exercise a conscious choice and initiative to change themselves. This *āyah* can be interpreted in two ways. According to Muḥammad Asad this *āyah* has a positive and a negative connotation. He said that man has been endowed with blessings which Allāh will not withdraw unless man's inner self becomes depraved, just as He does not bestow His blessings upon willful wrongdoers unless they change their own inner dispositions and become worthy of His Grace.²² Yusuf 'Ali understood this *āyah* to mean a change from good to evil, that is, people deviate from the original state of *fiṭrah* and incur the wrath of Allāh.²³

The latter interpretation is also held by a contemporary scholar, Shaykh Ja'far Idris, who finds support in the classical commentaries of at-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Ibn al-Jawzi and al-Qurtubi.²⁴ Shaykh Idris supports this interpretation because bounties are not initially bestowed on men as a result of any good they do, but are given them as a grace from Allāh. Allāh does not wait for people to do good before He extends His bounties to them. It is man's duty to be grateful for His bounties. In this way His blessings will be secured, but if man does wrong Allāh withholds His grace.²⁵ It is man's inner state that determines the external conditions in which he finds himself. This inner state is within man's control and in it he can exercise his freedom. This

view may be contrasted with the Marxist emphasis upon the material conditions that determine man's state. Marxism leaves him with little freedom to change himself, because the basis for change lies in external conditions.

Man himself may choose to conform to or to deviate from his true nature. If man conforms to his *fiṭrah*, his external circumstances will improve, but if he deviates from his *fiṭrah*, his circumstances will deteriorate. Man is a free being, capable of exercising his will in a positive way, by retaining his original good nature or in a negative way by changing from right to wrongdoing and corruption.

We have established that, in terms of the Qur'an, man is a free being, capable of choice and initiative. It follows that he is also a responsible being. To whom is man responsible? In contrast to Sartre's existentiality, where man's responsibility is to himself and not to any other being or authority, Islam teaches that man is responsible to Allāh for his actions. Man's freedom is not his own to do as he pleases. Even though he is at liberty to deny Allāh, the very maker of his freedom, he is nevertheless accountable to Allāh for his deeds.

Man's freedom implies responsibility. A clear indication of his responsibility is in the following *āyah*:

'Truly, We offered the amanah (trust, task, duty and thus responsibility) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they refused to carry it and they were afraid of it, and man undertook to carry it. Truly he is ignorantly unjust.' (Qur'an 33: 72)

According to Ibn ʿAbbas, may Allāh be pleased

with him, the term '*amanāh*', which is significant in this *āyah*, means obedience (*at-ta'āh*). The heavens and the earth refused the offer of freedom with responsibility, but Adam, peace be upon him, accepted it. Allāh, exalted is He, told Adam, peace be upon him, what it involves, 'If you do good you will be rewarded, and if you do wrong you will be punished.' This is why Allāh refers to him as unjust (*dhaluma*) and ignorant (*jahula*). Mujahid, Dahhak and al-Hasan al-Basri, may Allāh show mercy to them, were in agreement with Ibn 'Abbas that this *amanāh* involves the obligations (*fara'id*) and implies the acceptance of punishment for breaking the laws of Allāh and reward for doing right.²⁶ In short, *amanāh* means the responsibility of exercising obedience to the Divine will.

In contrast to the classical commentators, Muhammad Asad²⁷ believed that *amanāh* means 'reason' or 'intellect' and the 'faculty of volition (willing)'. Sayyid Qutb²⁸ and Iqbal²⁹ were also of the view that *amānah* refers to the free-will of man. Allamah Tabataba'i, another modern scholar, viewed *amanāh* as man's capacity for knowledge of Allāh and for the acts of justice which are essential for his Divinely prescribed role of *khalifāh* (vicegerent of Allāh) on earth.³⁰ However, both classical and modern scholars regard the responsibility and vicegerency of man as integral to *amanāh*.

It is by virtue of the Divinely endowed elements of '*aql* and will (*iradāh*) that man is made responsible for his actions, as indicated by the following Qur'anic *ayat*:

'If you do well, you do well for yourselves, and if

you do evil (you do it) against yourselves.'
(Qur'an 17: 17)

*'Then whoever does of a tiniest ant's the weight
of good will see it, and whoever does a tiniest
ant's weight of evil will see it.'*
(Qur'an 99: 7-8)

Implicit in these *ayat* is the concept of reward and punishment which makes sense only if man has free-will. To reward or punish a person for an act over which he had no control would have been incompatible with the spirit of Divine justice. Divine justice is meted out with full cognisance of the individual's circumstances and limitations. Man is beset with difficulties which limit his ability to exercise complete and absolute freedom. Absolute freedom belongs to Allāh only, and man's freedom should be seen in relation to the extent to which he participates in Divine freedom. Allāh is just and man is to be rewarded or punished for every action of right or wrongdoing that he has done. Man will not be required to accept responsibility for any burden he cannot bear.

'Allāh does not impose a burden on a self except according to its capacity. For it there is what it has actively earned, and against it what it has drawn upon itself.' (Qur'an 2: 286)

Having been granted freedom and responsibility, man commands a position as the most distinguished creature in the entire universe. He has been given the role and mission of *khalifāh* of Allāh. However, since man is weak and not in control of the powers of nature or even his own impulses, he is depend-

ent on Allāh's guidance. This guidance is granted to man in two forms: by means of his inherent capacity to distinguish right from wrong, and through Divine revelation and the Prophets, peace be upon them. In the light of man's limitations we need to reflect upon the following:

Firstly, Allāh has endowed man with true free-will.

Secondly, Allāh's power is absolute and man's freedom does not alter this power.³¹

Thirdly, Allāh deals with man in accordance with his own actions, that is, he is rewarded for good deeds and punished for wrong deeds.³² He, exalted is He, has endowed man with discretion and the power to choose. The very first *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Baqarāh* states that the ones who are guided by the Qur'an are those already inclined towards Allāh ('the people of *taqwa*' – i.e. of fearful obedience of Allāh). In another part of *Surah al-Baqarāh*, Allāh, exalted is He, speaks of sealing the 'hearts of the disbelievers'. It is the inclinations of man's heart to do good and serve Allāh that makes him worthy of Allāh's mercy. Rejection and disobedience of Allāh's guidance are first born in the hearts of men, and Allah 'seals' man's heart because man himself persists in rejecting the Divine message.

Fourthly, Allāh's mercy reaches everything. It pleases Allāh that His creation benefit from His kindness and it displeases Him if they reject Him and consequently deprive themselves of Divine blessing.³³

Man's freedom is a true freedom and he is accountable to Allāh alone for his actions. Absolute freedom rests with Allāh alone and so man ought

not to be arrogant about his gift of free-will. He can be saved from the illusion of his self-sufficiency by submitting his will to the Will of Allāh.

The intellectual problem of freedom arose when theologians attempted to reconcile the power and knowledge of Allāh with the freedom of man. There were several attempts to resolve this theological controversy rationally, none of which were completely convincing. Scholars who sought to affirm the power and knowledge of Allāh limited the freedom of man, while those who chose to affirm human freedom limited the power and knowledge of Allāh.

The problem of predestination cannot be resolved rationally, and the believer must take recourse to faith. He must believe that man has a limited free-will in relation to the Absolute Will of Allāh and that he is responsible for his actions and accountable to Allāh on the Day of Judgement.

In conclusion, man has limited freedom in relation to the absolute freedom of Allāh. He is beset with the psychological limitations of his lower *nafs* and the challenge of *shaytān*'s temptation in his internal and external circumstances. Man's purpose is to face the challenge of evil until he becomes fully liberated from it. Since he is able to reach the highest level of spiritual development, it indicates that he has a real power and freedom to liberate himself from the dominance of the lower *nafs* and attain harmony with his *fitrah* and thus with Allāh.

The control and healthy transmutation of the biological, emotional and psychological dimensions are possible through the exercise of man's will which is directed by the *‘aql*. Al-Ghazālī's dynamic inter-

action picture (cf. psychological implications of *fiṭrah*) illustrates the role of the *‘aql* in subduing the animal forces of anger and appetite which, through the instigation of the satanic element, seek to dominate the will.

The volitional implication of *fiṭrah* is that the individual must exercise his free-will to liberate himself from the negative influences of the lower *nafs* so that he may actualise his *fiṭrah* and attain inner peace and happiness. By extension, it also implies that people must strive to create a government that will implement *sharī‘ah*, so that the external material conditions of man may serve as fertile ground for the actualisation of the *fiṭrah* of all its citizens.

In terms of this interpretation of *fiṭrah* the individual and the collectivity must resist all forces, agencies and systems which impede the actualisation of man's full potential, spiritually, morally and intellectually.

6. THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF FITRAH

In Chapter 1, I noted that all of humankind know the universal message of *tawḥīd* in their *fiṭrah*, making them responsible for acknowledging Allāh and His Oneness. Obedience to the *sharī‘ah*,³⁴ however, is only required of those who have received the message of Islam. *Dīn al-Islam*, as pointed out in Chapter 1, is *Dīn al-Fiṭrah*, the Divinely prescribed way of life which accords fully with both the physical and spiritual human constitutions. *Dīn al-Islām* is the Way perfected for man by Allāh Himself, exalted is He; and the *sharī‘ah*, the Islamic code of law, also accords with *fiṭrah*. Divine Law is the framework within which man can both exercise and

regulate his free-will in accordance with the Divine Will and in harmony with his *fiṭrah*. Man is not accountable for an arbitrary, uncodified or codified, human-centred law conveniently attributed to God, but rather for a fully structured, absolute and immutable set of laws from Allāh for man, and for the benefit of man.

Imam an-Nawāwi defined *fiṭrah* as the unconfirmed state of *iman* until the individual consciously acknowledges his belief. Hence, if a child dies before he attains discretion he will be of the inmates of Paradise. This view applies to the children of polytheistic parents as well, and is supported by the following Prophetic *ḥadith*:

‘It is related that the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, said that he saw in a vision an old man at the foot of a large tree and around him were children. In the vision he was told that the old man was Ibrahim, peace be upon him, and the children around him were the children who, before attaining the age of discretion, had died. At this some of the Muslims asked him, “And the children of the polytheists too, Messenger of Allāh?” The Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, replied, “The children of the polytheists as well.”’³⁵

There are some legal implications of this meaning of *fiṭrah*: the child is born a Muslim, pure, sinless and predisposed to belief in and worship of the Creator. There are those, al-Qadi Abu Ya‘la and others, who argued that if *fiṭrah* means Islam, the child of polytheistic parents could not inherit from them in terms of Islamic law. However, an-Nawāwi argued

that although the child is born in a non-Muslim family he will be of the inmates of Paradise. Ibn Taimiyyah defended this view as well.³⁶

Thus, according to Ibn Taimiyyah, if one of the parents is a Muslim, be it the mother or father, then the child will be regarded as a Muslim and Islamic law will apply to him as a Muslim. However, if the child is born in a family where both his parents are non-Muslims, the laws that apply to him are those of his parents' *din*, although he is in a state of *fitrah*. Islamic law applies to children from Muslim families, but not children of non-Muslim families.

One of the legal problems presented by the view that every child is born a Muslim concerns the question of inheritance. From an Islamic point of view a Muslim child cannot inherit from a non-Muslim parent and vice-versa, but what about the child who is a Muslim before he attains discretion and has parents who are non-Muslim?

The *ḥadīth* which declares that every child is born in *fitrah*, i.e. a Muslim, is not a *ḥadīth* of *sharī'ah* but of the reality of the inner condition of the child; this explains the apparent inconsistency between the actual legal status of such a child and that suggested by this *ḥadīth*. We understand the parents making him into a Jew, a Christian or Magian in the sense that change takes place in the child from the time of his birth. The legal religion of the child is that of his parents, although he adopts that religion only when he is mentally mature. Some scholars have attempted to resolve this problem by means of the neutral or dualist interpretation of *fitrah*.

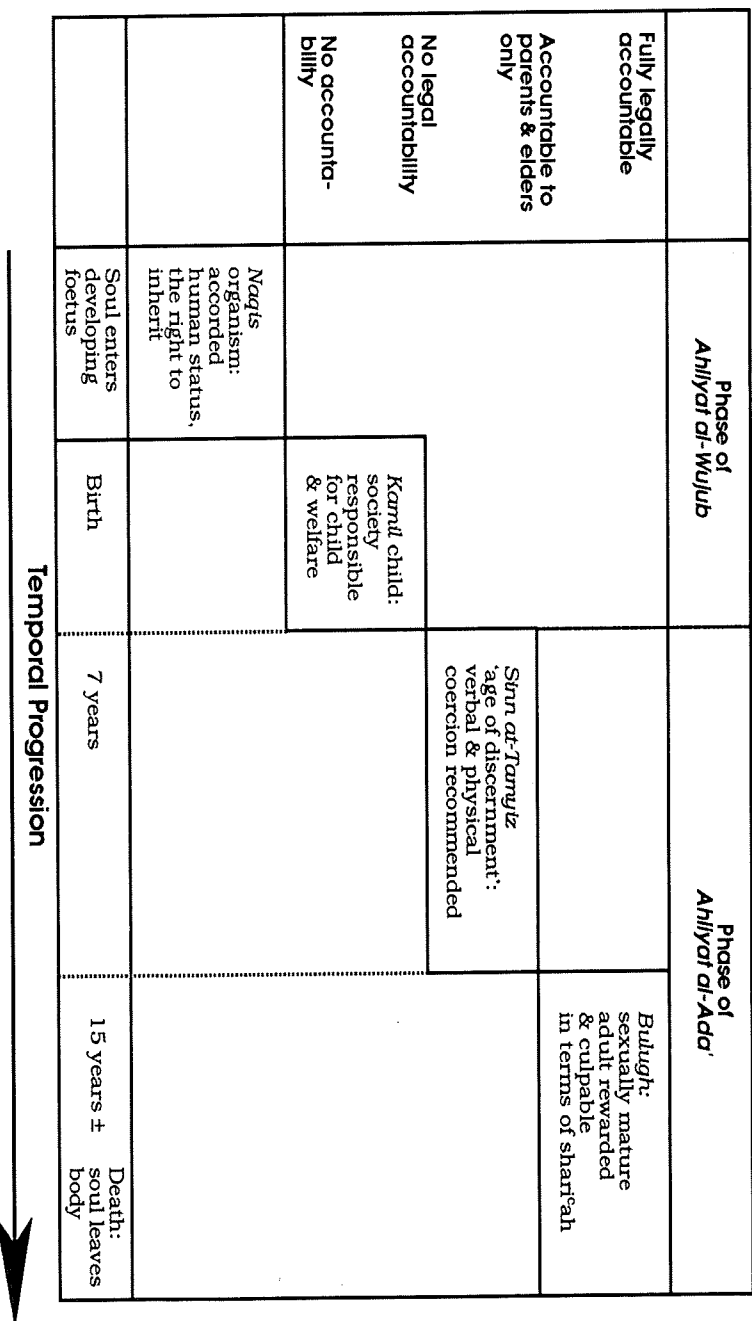
Islamic *usul al-fiqh* (the science of the sources of *fiqh*) recognises four stages in the life of a human

being. The various stages, or development phases, show degrees of responsibility which are governed by Islamic *fiqh*. We discuss here the legal parameters of human responsibility which emerge out of epistemological and volitional dimensions of *fitrah*. Legal capacity is therefore proportional to the mental capacity of the individual as well as his capacity for free-will. The diagram below illustrates that the degree of responsibility is proportional to the degree of competence. Islamic law and the degree of responsibility necessary for the individual's adherence to that law are directly linked to the particular stage of the individual's growth. Human accountability is governed these phases provided that a person is sane and fully conscious of his actions.

The diagram indicates that the life of a human being is divided into two broad phases. The first phase is referred to in Islamic terminology as *ahliyat al-wujub* (the person has no responsibilities, only rights) and the second phase as *ahliyat al-ada'* (the person becomes responsible for discharging duties). Each phase is further subdivided into two sub-stages. Islamic law governs these four stages by a very meticulously defined set of laws.³⁷

The first stage begins when the *ruh* enters the developing foetus and it ends at childbirth. At this stage, prior to childbirth, the organism is accorded human status. The foetus in the womb of the mother is referred to as *naqis* (incomplete), but when it is born it becomes *kamil* (complete). At this stage, immediately after childbirth, the human being is not held responsible for anything. However, society is held responsible for his welfare. For example, the prenatal organism is legally entitled to inherit, but

Diagram showing the cumulative development of the degree of legal responsibility over time



this is not applicable when the child dies; the parents or wards are held responsible for apportioning to the unborn child his rightful share of his inheritance. Also, the mother has a major responsibility towards the child in that she is not permitted to consume anything that would harm the foetus, e.g. injurious drugs.³⁸

The second stage begins at birth and lasts until the age of approximately seven, which most jurists regard as the age of discernment (*sinn at-tamyiz*). From the beginning of the first until the end of the second stage the child is not considered to be legally accountable to any being although he is subject to parental guidance and accountable to them as parents. The end of the second stage also marks the end of the first phase, *ahliyat al-wujub*, at the age of seven years. Up to this age he is categorised as *kamil*, complete, but has not been responsible for his actions nor was he expected to conform to the *sharī'ah*.³⁹

Formal practice of the *sharī'ah* begins at the age of discernment. The third stage, which is from seven to fifteen years of age approximately, begins when the individual attains the age of discernment. From the age of seven up to ten years parents are encouraged to use persuasion (verbal coercion), but between the ages of ten to fifteen years physical force is recommended. Parents are expected to urge their children to perform the prayer from the age of seven, according to a Prophetic tradition, and to beat them if they fail to perform it after the age of ten.⁴⁰

From the age of seven until the age of sexual maturity, the child is expected to pray and will be

rewarded by Allāh for his good deeds, but will not be punished in the next life if he does not practise the *sharī'ah*. At this stage the child is only partially responsible, i.e. he is responsible for obeying the commands of his parents. It is the parents' responsibility to encourage the child to pray, but he is not accountable to Allāh if he does not comply with this duty.⁴¹

The human being attains full responsibility in the fourth stage which begins with the age of sexual maturity (*bulūgh*) and lasts until death. At this stage man becomes responsible for practising all the laws of the *sharī'ah*. Sexual maturity is determined by physical signs such as ejaculation of semen, the growth of the beard, pubic hair and hair under the armpits, and the breaking of the voice, in the case of the male; and the menstrual period, the swelling of the breasts, the growth of pubic hair and hair under the armpit, in the case of the female.⁴²

If no physical signs of sexual maturity are observed then the age of fifteen lunar years is regarded as the maximum age for maturity (*bulūgh*) according to some scholars and eighteen according to some others. From the age of ten, parents are expected to use physical force if necessary, but from the age of fifteen the child falls under the jurisdiction of the *sharī'ah*. From the age of discretion until the age of sexual maturity the child is encouraged and, increasingly, compelled to act in accordance with Divine Law. After the attainment of *bulūgh* the young adult, himself or herself, becomes completely responsible for obeying Divine injunctions, for which he will be rewarded, and also for breaking such laws, for which he is now liable to be punished by Allāh.⁴³

Although it becomes compulsory for a Muslim child to conform to the *shari'ah* at *bulūgh*, this does not necessarily mean that he is regarded as intellectually mature. Certain restrictions upon the actions of those who despite being sexually mature, are nevertheless intellectually immature, exist in the *shari'ah*. Since intellectual maturity is vital for the administration of, for example, financial affairs, the *shari'ah* restricts the freedom of an intellectually immature person.

The importance of this distinction between sexual and intellectual maturity may be illustrated by means of an example concerning the problem of inheritance. A wealthy man dies, leaving all his wealth to his seven year old son. The child becomes sexually mature at the age of twelve which makes him spiritually responsible for conforming to the *shari'ah*. He is, however, not financially responsible, for he has not yet attained sufficient intellectual maturity to administer his own affairs. The age of *bulūgh* is not necessarily equivalent to the age of intellectual maturity.

The normal set of laws will apply to a person who has attained sexual maturity. However, the same set of laws does not apply to a person who, owing to natural causes, is suffering from an affliction that induces diminished responsibility.

Since the mental faculty of intellect (*ʿaql*) is the basic criterion of *taklif*, the Law concerns itself with the factors which affect the sanity and capacity of the individual. There are six natural impediments which exempt an individual from complete responsibility in *shari'ah*: insanity, mental retardation, unconsciousness, sickness, old age and death. These

impediments are beyond the control of the individual, but there are other impediments which are initiated by man himself and lead him to violate the *shari'ah*. If a person becomes, for example, intoxicated by the consumption of alcohol and as a result is not able to perform the five daily prayers, then he is guilty of wilfully breaking the law, for which there is no exemption.⁴⁴

Consequently, the laws of the *shari'ah* apply to the drunk person because he falls in the category of *ahliyat al-ada'*. His excuse of being drunk is, therefore, untenable. An insane person, on the other hand, is legally exempt from fulfilling the dictates of the *shari'ah* because he is no longer regarded as *ahliyat al-ada'*.⁴⁵

Apart from drunkenness and negligence, indifference and a lack of common sense are considered unnatural impediments to full maturity. It is not necessary to provide details of all these impediments and stages and the various opinions of the legal schools. A given set of laws describes the legal status of an individual, whether his conduct be influenced by physiological and psychological developmental factors or by the impediments referred to above. An outline of these phases has practical implications for determining the extent of the individual's responsibility for practising *shari'ah*.

Thus, *ahliyat al-ada'* or active legal capacity is only acquired upon attaining a certain level of intellectual maturity and competence. Only a person who understands his acts and his words can be held responsible (*taklif*) for his conduct. However, since intelligence and discernment are hidden qualities which are not readily apparent to the senses,

the *shari'ah* has linked personal responsibility with the attainment of the age of majority (*bulūgh*), which can easily be determined through factual evidence. Although the diagram shows the relationship between age and accountability, it is actually the intellectual faculty rather than age which determines the person's legal capacity, and that is precisely why an insane or unconscious person cannot be held responsible in the *shari'ah*. Active legal capacity is only complete therefore, with the attainment of mental maturity. A person who is capable of intellectual discernment is therefore presumed to be responsible (*taklif*), unless there is evidence to show that he or she is deficient in intellect or insane.⁴⁶

So far my discussion of the legal implications of *fiṭrah* has centred mainly on the legal responsibility of the Muslim. I have not attempted a discussion of the connection *fiṭrah* has with the various branches of *shari'ah* simply because of the extreme diversity of the law. Nevertheless, I shall now, as concluding remarks, refer to two examples from two different aspects of Islamic law in order to illustrate how *fiṭrah* bears a direct relevance to legal directives and prescriptions.

In Muslim personal law, the institution of marriage aids in disciplining and regulating the sexual instincts of the *nafs*, which form an important part of it. In this way marriage enables man to conform to his innate inclination to worship Allāh and obey His laws, instead of submitting to his lower impulses. With regard to the laws relating to formal worship (*ʿibadat*), the institutions of prayer (*ṣalāh*) and fasting (*sawm*) enable the believer to turn away from wrongdoing (*munkar*) and to enhance con-

sciousness of Allāh – an essential process in actualisation of *fiṭrah*. Similarly, all other branches of the *sharī'ah* help to guide and direct the believer's *‘aql* and *iradah* towards the fulfilment of his ultimate goal in life – the actualisation of his *fiṭrah*.

man ‘araḥa nafsāhu faqad ‘araḥa Rabbahu
'He who knows himself knows his Lord.'

This chapter marks the end of discussions related to the major theoretical assumptions of *fiṭrah* together with their underlying metaphysical principles. At this point, you should be adequately familiar with the concept of *fiṭrah* – its meaning, major interpretations and implications.

However, some very practical questions may have arisen during a reading of the first three chapters: if *fiṭrah* is such a powerful force within man, how does one explain the evil which is so rife in this world and how can an understanding of *fiṭrah* help to curb this evil trend? If human goodness is such an absolute and pervasive trait, how does one explain the crimes of man against man and against his environment throughout recorded human history? What are the factors which impede or enhance the actualisation of *fiṭrah*? These and related practical issues will be discussed in the chapter which follows.

Notes and references

1. S. H. Nasr, 'Who Is Man?' in the *Sword of Gnosts*, ed. J. Needleman, (Maryland, 1974), p. 208.
2. Ibid., p. 210.
3. Ibid., p. 210.
4. Ibid., p. 211.
5. Ibid., p. 211.
6. Ibid., p. 211.
7. Ibid., pp. 212-213.
8. The Lowest level of knowledge in the hierarchy of knowledge is the sensory level. Even the Greek philosophers are in agreement that the senses are doubtful media for the acquisition of knowledge. A higher level of knowledge is acquired through reason, but reason itself depends upon recollections based on sensory impressions; and this limitation of reason is affirmed by the perspectivist nature of philosophic thought throughout the ages. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111 C.E.) himself, being acutely aware of the limitations of human reason, turned to mystical experience for certainty, which reason alone is incapable of attaining, but which may be attained by the *ʿaql*. See also Abu'l-Hassan ʿAli Nadwi, *Religion and Civilization*, (Lucknow: Islamic Research and Publications, 1970), pp. 14-15.
9. *Murtazilah* literally means 'the separatists'. They were a sect of Muslims founded by Wasil ibn ʿAta' who separated from the school of Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 A.H.). They believed that all knowledge is acquired through reason, and held that the cognition of good and evil is within the realm of reason, that nothing is known to be right or wrong until reason has enlightened us as to its distinction as such, and that thankfulness for the blessings of the Benefactor is made obligatory by reason, even before the promulgation of any law on the subject. They also maintained that man has absolute freedom, that he is the

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author of his actions, right and wrong, and that he deserves reward or punishment accordingly in the Hereafter.

10. J. Needleman, op. cit., p. 210.

11. I. Faruqi, 'Islam and Culture as Civilisation' in *Islam and Contemporary Society*, ed. S. Azzam, (New York, 1982), p. 154.

12. C.E.M. Joad, *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), p. 436.

13. M. Umaruddin, *The Ethics and Philosophy of Al-Ghazali* (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1982), p. 175.

14. Qur'an 12: 53.

15. Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision in Classical Islam*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), p. 243.

(i) The Selfish Desires of the *Nafs*: it desires its own pleasures through its innate tendencies of lust (*shahwah*) and passion (*hawa*).

(ii) The Autonomous Claim of the *Nafs*: it makes claim over its self-centred power (*haw*) and strength (*quwwah*), and to follow its own planning (*tadbir*) without regard for Allah's guidance.

(iii) The Antagonistic Temper of the *Nafs*: it tempts man to act in accordance with his natural inclination for restless movement (*harakah*) and listless passivity (*sukun*) in opposition to Allah's command (*amr*) and prohibition (*nahy*).

16. Najm al Din ar-Razi, *The Path to God's Bondsman from Origin to Return*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1982), trans. Hamid Algar, p. 195.

17. An-Nawawi, *Forty Hadith*, (Lahore: Kazi Publications, no date), trans. Ibrahim and Davies, p. 110.

18. A. Quasem, *The Nature of al-Ghazali's Ethics*, (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 47-48.

19. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

20. M. Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazali*, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

21. Ibid., pp. 63-64.

22. M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, (Gibraltar: Darul Andalus, 1980), p. 360.

23. Yusuf 'Ali, *Tarjumat Ma'ani al-Qur'an al-Karim*, (Riyadh: The Islamic University of al-Imam Muhammad ibn Saud, no date), p. 606.

24. G.S. Idris, *The Process of Islamisation*, (The M.S.A. of the U.S.A. and Canada, 1983), pp. 3-4.

25. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

26. M.A. Sabuni, *Mukhtasar Tafstr ibn Kathir*, (Beirut: Darul Qur'an al-Karim, 1981), Vol. III, p. 118.
27. M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, op. cit., p. 653.
28. S. Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, (Darul Shuruq: 1979), Vol. V, pp. 2284-2885.
29. M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1960), p. 93.
30. M.H. Tabatabai, *Al-Mizan fi Tafstr al-Qur'an*, (Tehran: Darul Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1342 A.H.), Vol. XVI, pp. 370-374.
31. Qur'an 36: 54.
32. Qur'an 6: 17-18.
33. Qur'an 2: 26.
34. Islamic law is distinguished from contemporary human law by virtue of its Divine origin. The foundations and the primary sources of *shari'ah* are the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Within the fixed parameters determined by the principles of these sources provision is made for the amendment, diversification and development of the *shari'ah* in space and time in terms of the dynamic principles of *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* comprises the secondary sources of Islamic law, viz. *qiyas* (analogical reasoning) and *ijma'* (consensus). Those who, by virtue of their knowledge, competence and fearful obedience of Allah, are qualified to engage in *ijtihad* are known as *mujtahidin*. The four sunni Muslim Imams who codified Islamic law are examples of such men.
35. M.A. Qurtubi, *Al-Jami'u li-Ahkam al-Qur'an* (Cairo: Al-Maktabul 'Arabiyyah, 1967), Vol. VII, Part 14, p. 301?
36. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Daru Ta'arrud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, (Riyadh: Jami'ah al-Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud al-Islamiyyah, 1409 A.H./1981 C.E.) Vol. VIII, pp. 382-383.
37. A. Sabuni and M. Sibai, *Al-Ahwal al-Shakhsiyyah*, (Damascus: University of Damascus, 1397 A.H./1978 C.E.), p. 12.
38. Ibid., p. 13.
39. Ibid., p.13.
40. Ibid., p. 14.
41. Ibid., p. 14.
42. Ibid., p. 14.
43. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
44. Ibid., pp. 16-18.
45. Ibid., pp. 16-18.
46. M.H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991) pp. 351-352.

CHAPTER 4

The Intellectual Relevance of Fitrah

Having fully discussed the definition, interpretations, and implications of *fitrah*, we turn now to the relevance of *fitrah*. *Fitrah's* relevance is implicit in the discussion of the implications of *fitrah* (Chapter 3). Assumptions of human nature have a direct bearing on psycho-spiritual growth, Islamic law, psychology and education. One cannot, for example, develop a theory of education without certain assumptions concerning human nature. The concept of *fitrah* is therefore relevant for all of these areas; but an elaboration of its relevance in these various disciplines, requires separate treatment in a separate work. This chapter focusses on the origins of secularism in the West, and how it conflicts with the goal of actualising *fitrah*. It concludes with an Islamic response to secularism and secular theories of human nature, and demonstrates how *fitrah*, as an Islamic concept of human nature, is employed in such a response.

1. THE ORIGINS OF SECULARISM IN THE WEST

Before the rise of Christianity, Greek cosmology was permeated with spiritual forces governing and sustaining the universe. Their philosophers acknowledged the underlying principle (*arche*) which forms

the basis of all reality. With the banishment of gods from their respective domains in nature, Greek philosophy was reduced from being a symbolic interpretation of nature to a rationalistic and naturalistic interpretation. Nature was no longer governed by a transcendent principle but by the principle of causation, i.e. cause and effect.¹

When Christianity established itself in the Roman empire, Aristotelian rationalism and naturalism had already come to dominate the lives and minds of the Latin peoples. Christianity came under the influence of this naturalistic rationalism. An excessive attraction to the profane world of nature appeared to Christians a blasphemy that blinded men to the perception of God. Christianity reacted to this naturalism by emphasising the absolute cleavage that exists between the supernatural and the natural worlds, and so depriving nature itself of the Divine spirit which breathes through all things.² Hence, to save the souls of men who would otherwise have been adversely affected by a positive inclination to nature, Christianity had to undermine the spiritual significance of nature.

Unfortunately, in the process, an alienation from nature took place with disastrous consequences for the subsequent history of Christianity. Christian theology, which had become more philosophical than metaphysical, began to suppress the role of the *‘aql* as a means by which man is able to perceive the spiritual significance of nature. Instead, it encouraged an un-questioning blind faith through the exercise of sheer human will.

In my discussion of the epistemological implications of *fitrah* (Chapter 3), I have already explained

that reason, when it functions in conformity with *‘aql*, is capable of understanding spiritual realities. But, once reason becomes severed from its principle, that is *‘aql* or the higher aspect of *‘aql* (as we see from the inevitable absorption of Aristotelianism into Christian theology, clearly exemplified by the theological exposition of Thomas Aquinas³ in the 13th Century), the world of nature is seen as a material physical entity with no connection to spiritual reality and the Divine principle underlying it. The Thomistical theological perspective amounted to the denial of man's supra-rational faculty, and so undermining his capacity for transcendental perception of even the sensory orders of reality. This perspective does not recognise the Divine principle underlying the natural universe; nor does it permit man to know himself in any other way than through sense perception. Aquinas said:

‘Although through revelation we can become capable of knowing things which we otherwise would not know, we do not know them in any other way than through the senses.’⁴

A major intellectual shift gradually took place, from the 11th to the 13th centuries, resulting in Christian theological rationalism as epitomised by Thomas Aquinas. This rationalism came to replace earlier Augustinian theology which was based on a gnostic and contemplative view of man and nature.

In this way, man's view of himself and of nature was gradually secularised. The soil was fertile for that revolution which brought an end to the integral Christian civilisation of the medieval age. The time was ripe for the cultivation of the natural sci-

ences outside the traditional Christian world view.⁵ With the Renaissance, European man lost his faith, and having become totally earth-bound he lost his capacity to transcend his terrestrial existence. In the words of Nasr, 'freedom for him now became quantitative and horizontal rather than qualitative and vertical, and it was in this spirit that he went on to conquer the earth'.⁶

Perhaps a more significant factor in the secularisation of the West was the Cartesian dualism of matter and spirit which left nature open to the service of secular science. So man began to perceive himself more in terms of his humanity, individuality and freedom.⁷ The domain of nature was exclusively matter, devoid of any *Vestigia Dei*, 'traces of the Divine'. It was for the sole purpose of being conquered by man to serve his animal needs.

17th century rationalism became the background for subsequent scientific thought up to the present day. The fruits of secularising science and philosophy were modern Western man's belief in human evolution and historicism. Although secularism was alien to original Christianity, I have noted briefly how subsequent Christian theological developments contributed to the process of secularisation in the West.

Today, secularism has almost supplanted Christianity in the heart and mind of Western man. In this connection al-°Attas said:

'The disenchantment of nature and the terrestrialisation of man has resulted, in the former case, in the reduction of nature to a mere object of utility having only a functional significance

and value for scientific and technical management and for man; and in the latter case, in the reduction of man of his transcendent nature as spirit emphasising his humanity and physical being, his secular knowledge and power and freedom, which led to his deification, and so to his reliance upon his own rational efforts of enquiry into his origins and final destiny and his own knowledge thus acquired which he now sets up as the criterion for judging the truth or falsehood of his own assertions.⁸

This reduction of man's transcendental nature (*rūh*), for the sake of emphasising purely human and physical elements, may also be referred to as 'humanism' or 'individualism' which is defined by Rene Guenon as 'the denial of any principle superior to individuality'.⁹ Man is the measure of all things; he is the only criterion for determining truth and reality; and any reliance on God, Divine revelation or a supra-rational faculty (*ʿaql*) would amount to a violation of the doctrine of humanism.

The absolutisation of reason meant the repudiation of intellectual intuition in favour of naturalism. It went hand in hand with the negation of metaphysics.¹⁰ This constitutes rationalism, a process of analysis and division rather than one of integration and spiritual discernment. Since reason is relative and only capable of valid application within a relative sphere, it is natural that 'relativism' be the logical consequence of rationalism. However, rationalism contained within it the seeds of its own destruction. Naturalism, which is consistent with evolutionary theories of becoming, was bound to turn

against rationalism. It reproached reason for its inadequacy either to deal properly with what is nothing but change and multiplicity or to include within its concepts the indefinite complexity of the things of the senses.¹¹ All that matters now is 'reality' limited exclusively to the sensory level. The intellect is compelled to operate only on that level. Reason itself is made to serve the fashioning of matter for industrial purposes only. Once truth becomes a substitute for utility, pragmatism becomes the norm. Then we are no longer concerned with pure human rationalism, but have entered the sub-human sphere, with the appeal to the subjective element in man.

According to Guenon, the birth of the modern world began before the Renaissance and Reformation, which actually 'completed rather than provoked the rupture of tradition'. The acceptance of the secular doctrine of humanism actually implies a refusal to admit any authority higher than man himself, as well as any faculty of knowledge (i.e. the '*aql*') superior to individual discursive reasoning. The two are inseparable from one another. Consequently, the modern spirit was bound to reject all 'spiritual authority' which originates in the supra-human domain.¹²

The rise of science just before the enlightenment prepared the way for a revolution in philosophy. Bacon was among those figures who made remarkable discoveries through observation, experimentation and inductive reasoning from observed data. Their method of discovery itself was a prelude to new and independent thinking in philosophy. Sense experience became the only authentic means of at-

taining true knowledge of reality.

Rationalism advocates deductive, theoretical reasoning while empiricism favours inductive experimental reasoning. Both systems focus exclusively on sensory or physical reality while denying the existence of true and valid knowledge from metaphysical reality. Again this entails, at least, an implicit rejection of a faculty within man for apprehending transcendental knowledge.

Positivism and pragmatism are outgrowths of empiricism and were advocated by Compte (1798-1857 C.E.), James (1842-1910 C.E.) and Dewey (1859-1952 C.E.). These philosophers insisted that the ultimate form of knowledge is the scientific description of information acquired through sensory experience and by means of experimental observation.

With the further development of the scientific method and the wider application of technology, philosophers of the late 19th and 20th centuries began to view the structure and the functioning of all things, including life itself, as a function of the laws of physics and chemistry. This is the mechanistic world-view where the universe operates automatically, like a machine. By virtue of a mechanistic interpretation, human nature itself is viewed within the context of the laws of science, chemical reactions and motion. Thus, the mind, emotions, etc., are mere functional adjuncts of the material body, complex conglomerations of cell processes and chemical reactions.

The materialistic perspective of Hobbes in the 19th century and the projectionist theory of Feuerbach in the 18th century foreshadowed the age of atheism. Marx (1818-1883 C.E.) instituted atheistic

philosophy as an *a priori* political doctrine adopted by communism.

Sartre (1905-1980 C.E.), who developed atheistic existentialism as a literary movement, viewed the mind as devoid of any 'contents'; an entity which is an activity and which possesses the capacity to project itself onto phenomenal reality. Man, as a free being, must fashion his own destiny for which he himself is responsible. There is no higher force playing a role in man's destiny, and man would not be acting responsibly and in good faith if his actions were bound by the dictates of a Divine or human authority.

Behaviourism, however, has a view of human behaviour bound by the environment, but not a view of innate human nature. The behaviourism of Pavlov (1849-1936 C.E.), Watson (1878-1958 C.E.), and Skinner (b. 1904 C.E.) amounted to stripping the individual entirely of his affective dimension; the mind and the emotions being regarded as totally irrelevant for an understanding of the nature of man. Behaviourists believe that human behaviour can be studied objectively by observing the response of organisms such as rats and cats to specific stimuli in the environment. Here the mechanistic view of man is incorporated into psychological theory.

Modern science and technology are in many ways the consequences of the historical secular trend. I have already alluded to how post-Renaissance philosophy and the scientific spirit have alienated man from nature and how *orthodox* Christianity has been divested of the traditional contemplative spirit. Even the premises of modern science, as a function of secularism, serve to alienate man from his true

nature.

Modern science is a manifestation of current secular philosophy. Hence, it recognises sensory observation as the only valid mode of knowledge. The intellect is only capable of discursive reason. In this respect, modern science is no less dogmatic than dogmatic religion itself since it precludes any possibility of spiritual illumination of the intellect. In similar vein, the spiritual, supra-rational faculty (*ʿaql*) within man is rejected as the subjective indulgence of mystics who seek to evade the adversities of phenomenal reality.

Islamic epistemology gives recognition to both the phenomenal and the metaphysical dimensions of reality. Hence *fiṭrah*, while referring essentially to the spiritual dimension of man, does not at all deny his physical reality. The supremacy of the technical and rational over the other worldly and spiritual impulses in man is an indication of the evolving process of dehumanisation in the secular trend. It is not surprising that metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of reality and *fiṭrah* are not even recognised as valid or serious disciplines of study; modern science has reduced man to a conglomerate of mind and matter which is, at most, capable of intuition.

2. AN ISLAMIC RESPONSE TO SECULARISM

Secularism may be defined as a worldly phenomenon whose origin is exclusively human and severed from any metaphysical principle. It implies that all ideas and institutions of merely human origin are not derived from an inspired Divine source. In order to understand the Islamic position with re-

gard to secularism one needs to first say a word about Islam itself.

In Islam there is not the same distinction between religious and secular, sacred and profane, church and state, as there is in Christianity. The unitary perspective of Islam is rooted in the metaphysical principle of *tawhīd* in which all aspects of life are within the power of Allāh. In this sense, nothing can be ultimately profane because everything has its origin in the Divine. *La ilāha illā'llāh* means that there can be no other reality except the One Ultimate Reality, Allāh, the source of all that is considered real.¹⁴

Prophets have been sent to man over the ages to guide him towards the One Absolute Reality so that he may become what he always was in his pre-existence, and to become the embodiment of his primordial essence, which is his *fiṭrah*. If man knows himself, his *fiṭrah*, he comes to know his Creator. The Prophet Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, the last of the Prophets, did not claim to have brought a new truth. He came to re-establish the truth of the primordial tradition (*ad-dīn al-ḥanīf*), which is Islam in its original essence and Islam in its final form.

The source of all secularism is the separation of man's being from the Divine. Divine guidance is directed towards overcoming that rift. Secularism is not a new phenomenon. It has become, from the point of view of man's historical existence, as real as religion itself. In the contemporary West, secularism has become an all-pervasive reality which has in many ways supplanted the original power of religion itself. It has not become uncommon for

modern men to have completely forgotten Allāh. The all-pervasive belief in secularism has not as thoroughly affected the Muslim world as it has the West. It has had no effect upon the un-changing Divine word of the Qur'an, although it has influenced modern men's interpretation of it. But it needs to be borne in mind that Islam, in contrast to Christianity which has been supplanted by modern Western civilisation, is still today a living tradition.

There is a need however, to examine the extent and nature of the impact of modern Western secularism on the Muslim world; and precisely how it has served as an impediment to the actualisation of *fitrah* individually and collectively. But this will require treatment in a separate work.

It would be wrong to give the impression that secularism is a recent development in the Islamic world. Secular ideas and ideologies (in the sense defined above) intruded into the world-view of Muslim civilisation soon after the Qur'anic revelation. The establishment of empires signalled the first intrusions of secularism into the political life of Islam. By this I mean that politics became separated from Qur'anic Divine guidance, and became the prerogative of ambitious men operating in the sphere of power.

We are not suggesting that foreign ideas had to be rejected simply because they derived from a foreign source. Islamic civilisation was open to adopting foreign ideas and adapting them to its world-view. Often there was an affinity with those foreign ideas which also had a sacred source. Muslims, for example, accepted those elements of the Graeco-Roman heritage which were ultimately from a sacred source, but not the secular and naturalistic

elements of it.

Not all alien elements were adequately integrated into the Islamic world-view. For example, the element of rationalism inherent in Aristotle's peripatetic philosophy penetrated the Islamic world. Rationalism based itself exclusively on human reason as the only valid criteria for judgement. As I have demonstrated in the epistemological implications of *fitrah*, human reason, while legitimate in itself, becomes a source of potential secular danger when divorced from the higher aspect of *'aql*. Rationalism became embodied in various philosophical and theological movements, particularly *Mu'tazilāh* theology (*Kalam*) which declined only in the 12th century C.E.

The most pernicious effect of Western secularism in the Muslim world has only been seen since the 19th century, and it was facilitated by the moral and intellectual weakness of the Muslim world in the latter part of the 18th century. Western secularism began to affect every realm of Muslim life, particularly in the field of education. Schools and universities have emerged based on the European models, teaching European subjects from the point of view of European invaders. Although the classical schools also taught languages, natural sciences and philosophy, they were taught from an Islamic perspective and not from an alien perspective.¹⁵

Modern sciences assume a particular alien world-view and cannot be considered a perpetuation of Islamic sciences as many Muslim apologists are inclined to believe. Alien secular perspectives, such as the Darwinian theory of evolution, are bound to alienate the Western educated Muslim from his tra-

dition. Today, the graduate of a modern university and the graduate of a *Dār al-ʿUlūm* speak two different languages because of conflicting orientations and perspectives. Such differences have certainly created rifts in the Muslim social order.

Many modernist leaders have emerged to respond to the impact of secularism by attempting to reconstruct Islam in accordance with the current fashion of popular secular trends (see, for example, the works of Sir Seyyed Aḥmad Khan and Sayyid Amīr Ālī). The Islamic world is faced with the mortal danger of the *shirk* of secularism which is competing with the authentic Islamic teachings of the Noble Qur'an. Professor Ismail Faruqi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Naquib al Attas are contemporary intellectual giants in the Islamic world who have made serious attempts to respond to the deadly poison of secularism.

No doubt, Western secular civilisation has caused a radical change in the Muslim world, particularly in its political and educational domains. Today, the Muslim world can no longer claim that the problems of modernity are exclusively the problem of the West. As a response to modernity many Muslim scholars have made every attempt possible to make Islam conform to the scientific and philosophical spirit of the day. This apologetic attitude has not halted the rapid spread of secularisation in the Muslim world. Failure to respond Islamically and yet dispassionately to modern secular theories of man and society has only brought about a syncretism between modern thought and Islamic principles which can only provide a transient sense of bridging the gap between modern knowledge and

the Islamic legacy.

The traditional system of education is not structured to address the challenges of modernity, and therefore the conflicts between the modern educated Muslims and the 'ulama' continue in the face of increasing division in the Muslim *Ummāh*. The voice of Faruqi's Islamisation of knowledge has now been heard and there have been some sincere attempts to bring about a creative synthesis between the Islamic legacy and modern disciplines. These attempts are not always from a proper Islamic point of view, and often betray a lack of in-depth knowledge of modern disciplines.

Faruqi's solution to the educational dichotomy assumes that modern knowledge cannot be considered to be value-free and that it needs to be assessed within the framework of Islam. Islamisation does not mean a rejection of modern knowledge, but an attempt to divest it of secular elements and infuse it with the vision of Islam.¹⁶ The secular philosophical perspective which accompanies the social sciences is opposed to the Islamic world-view. This is not to say that no benefit can be derived from modern social sciences, which are limited in their reductionism and their absolute dependence on human reason as the only source of knowledge. Such a subjective view of man's capacity for knowledge is bound to reduce human nature to material elements alone.

Faruqi was very concerned about the pernicious effects of a modern university education on the Muslim student who is in danger of becoming alienated from the Islamic tradition.¹⁷ Apart from the problem of a divisive education, there is also the

problem of the penetration of foreign modes of everyday living into the Muslim world; particularly for Muslim minorities in the Western world, who are directly surrounded and confronted by alien ideologies and practices.

These moral and intellectual dilemmas can only be combatted by a sound educational programme which includes Islamisation of knowledge as one of its objectives. The task of Islamisation is the task of scholars, and must be perceived in the context of its confrontation with secular theories of God and man. *Fitrah* must feature as an important cognitive component of the Islamisation process.

Faruqi was concerned with the alienation of the Muslim student from the Islamic tradition because of the systematic impact of modern science. The Muslim student is armed with Islamic sentiment but not with the intellectual weapons to confront alien ideologies.¹⁸

Alienation can be curbed by an Islamic response to these sciences. But such a response is only possible if the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnāh* are the ultimate criteria for assessing the value and validity of modern disciplines.

However, an Islamic response is only possible after a critical study of the modern secular disciplines as well as of the Islamic legacy. I attempt, in the following section, to develop a critical Islamic response to secular theories of human nature by employing the concept of *fitrah*.

My intention is to highlight those areas of conflict between Darwin, Freud and Skinner's views of human nature and the Islamic concept of human nature. By so doing, I hope to clarify the Islamic

view of human nature for the Western educated reader as well as demonstrate the intellectual relevance of *fitrah*.

In the preceding paragraphs I have situated the problem of Western secularism from an Islamic point of view. Implicit in the following section is the impact of secularism on three secular theories of human nature and the Islamic response to them in the light of *fitrah* as an intellectual concept. We begin with the Darwinian theory of evolution, itself a product of 19th century philosophy, which has become the dogma of modern biology presented to the world as axiomatic truth, and which has pervaded all realms of modern thought.

3. SECULAR THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE

The effect of the secular trend on the concept of man runs through Western disciplines in the humanities. *Fitrah*, as an intellectual concept, stands in contra-distinction to the various secular theories of human nature. Firstly, it does so because these theories reject a metaphysical order of reality and secondly, they ignore the transcendent dimension of the human constitution. The disagreement between *fitrah* and secular theories of human nature can be examined with reference to those aspects of modern Western psychological theories which are in direct conflict with the fundamental principles of the concept of *fitrah*. What follows below will not be an exposition of the secular theories, but rather an evaluation of the secular assumptions in those theories.

Apart from a purely religious response to secularism as a whole, it is also possible to challenge

the scientific and intellectual principles and assumptions of secular theories of human nature. *Fitrah*, as both an existential reality and a theoretical construct, poses a very real challenge to the keystone of every rationalist secular view of man. We have, so far, referred to *fitrah* as an existential reality, the actual essence within man, but I have not yet argued the relevance and validity of a theory which is clearly at variance with current views of human nature. In this section I shall attempt to show how *fitrah*, as an intellectual concept, negates such secular theories.

3.1 Darwinian Evolution

Although the theory of evolution is not a theory of human nature as such, its implications point to a secular view of man. Darwinian evolution is primarily a scientific hypothesis which attempts to biologically account for the origins of existing species from unlike ancestors in terms of gradual changes in successive generations of living things. My approach here will specifically address the rational foundations, assumptions and implications of evolutionary theory.

Charles Darwin (1809-1882 C.E.) did not himself hold secular assumptions on human nature. It was neo-Darwinism which proposed that chemical evolution from non-life to life occurred, and that a common ancestry accounts for similarities between different kinds of living organisms. It brought with it a host of views on the nature of man.

The theory of macro-evolution by natural selection and of the relationship between classes and orders of organisms appears today to be based on

very dubious foundations: the series of 'missing links', fantastic and highly imaginative reconstructions, 'scientific frauds' such as Piltdown Man, and biochemists' 'prebiotic soup' from which life on earth supposedly originated. All these add to the mounting absurdity which surround evolutionary theory today. But this is not my concern here. We aim to address some of the principles of evolutionary theory which conflict with *fitrah*.

According to neo-Darwinian theory, life started quite by accident with an arbitrary combination of nucleic acids, enzymes, proteins and the like which formed the wonderful DNA molecule – containing the code of life itself. Less plausible are the theories of the origin of the universe itself, which range from the 'big-bang' theory, to the theory of eternal existence or 'continuous creation', to the 'mind-to-molecules' theory.¹⁹ All these notions raise more questions than they provide answers and are not in the least satisfactory to any thinking individual.

The Qur'anic account of Allāh's command, 'Be!', seems not only more likely, but also more sensible. It is quite reasonable to suggest a transcendental origin for the universe when phenomenal explanations border on the absurd.

The ontological state of *fitrah*, as a created entity and an existential reality, can thus have its origins in One Absolute Reality and not in some immeasurably small, chance factor which just happened from nowhere, with no cause but with a fantastic series of effects which presumably evolved into man as we have him today. Allāh's creation of a universe and of man reflects an objective, purposive and intentional act. Evolutionists believe that man and

his nature are the consequence of something evolved from nothingness. They deny the existence of the All-Knowing Creator of man and his intrinsic nature. They allege instead that biological man and his innate nature have evolved from nothing to simple cells to more complex cells, undergoing countless numbers of mutations to produce man, complete with mind, body and soul.

Fitrah is the spiritual essence of man from Allāh Himself; it does not evolve, because it is pure, incorruptible and immutable. Whereas the Muslim has clarity and a reasonable notion of both his origin and his destiny, the secular evolutionist has confounded himself with circular arguments: a nonsensical account of the origins of man and his nature, and a ludicrous prognosis for his destiny. The satanic promise of the kingdom that never decays is as much a tenet of evolutionary theory as of any other secular world-view. Darwin himself proclaimed that since the long chain of lineal descendants in this hypothesis has never been broken man 'may look forward with great confidence to a secure future of great length'.²⁰

Another fundamental tenet of evolutionary theory is the presumed existence of intermediate forms between, for example, two classes of living organisms. The obvious assumption is that existing classes have, through natural selection, undergone mutations and that there would thus be evidence of extant or extinct transitional forms to support this thesis. However, research has revealed great discontinuities in nature and the defiantly conspicuous absence of transitional forms. For example, evolutionists have no fossil records to show any link

between amphibian quadrupeds and horses. There is more evidence to suggest the existence of ideal forms, created by an omnipotent God at a time when He deemed necessary. The gap between man and ape is so vast that the question of intermediate forms does not even arise.

In the central *hadith* the creation of ideal forms of both man and beast is made explicit. In terms of the concept of *fitrah* as a whole, the physical constitution of man is an original given:

‘Every child is born in a state of *fitrah* ... just as an animal is born intact. Do you see any of them maimed (at birth)?’

Scientific evidence as well as Islamic tradition point to the ‘sudden’ appearance of living organisms and man; and the notion of gradual evolution, mutation or transition is both contrary to revelation and scientifically unfounded. I have already pointed out that *fitrah*, as a transcendental and existential reality, is immutable and incorruptible. It follows that apes, which do not possess the innate nature of humans, could not, by the furthest stretch of the imagination, have ‘acquired’ such a nature which then evolved along with their physical beings into modern man.

It is equally ludicrous to think of an immutable intrinsic nature co-existing with a physical form that evolved somewhere from animal ancestry to man. Physically and spiritually man is and always has been the same; his physical and spiritual constitution is, in its complete and wholesome form, conceived and created by Allāh.

The discrepancy between the idea of transitional

forms as opposed to that of ideal forms signifies yet further contrasts between *fiṭrah* and the Darwinian concept of man. In terms of evolutionary theory the mutations that have occurred over millions of years manifest a progression from the simple unicellular to complex multicellular organisms. Accordingly, natural selection accounts for the increasing diversity, complexity and ascendancy of creatures through each successive era of evolution; many creatures are becoming more adaptable to their environments and are superior to other creatures that have not evolved to the extent they have. Theoretically, the logical inference is Darwin's conception of the survival of the fittest. These ideas are anathema to the Islamic concepts of *fiṭrah* and creation.

Firstly, natural selection suggests the emergence of the greater from the lesser, of man from lower species of animals; appending labels such as complexity and diversity is merely the use of euphemisms. The Islamic belief in ideal forms is analogous to the principle of *al-insān al-kāmil* which is antithetical to the theoretical implications of natural selection.

As explained in Chapter 2, the *fiṭrah* of man is derived from the spiritual prototype of *Nur Muḥammad*, the pre-existential light which issued forth from the ultimate and absolute source – Allāh. Similarly, historical prophetic models, from Adam, peace be upon him, to Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, manifested an original and sustained standard of spiritual and moral excellence. In these respects they were the greater and the rest of mankind the lesser; the rest of the living world is devoid of spiritual essence and it is sacrile-

gious to refer to such lower forms of life as the ancestors of man.

Secondly, natural selection, in Darwinian terms is an entirely random process, a kind of spontaneous, unintelligent, but creative innovation. Evolutionists claim that the entire complex of intricate design and order in the universe and more specifically in the biosphere is ultimately the fortuitous consequence of an entirely blind random process – a giant lottery.²¹ Islam rejects this notion because it negates the verities of an omnipotent Creator.

A pertinent question to evolutionists is: how can disorder, non-intelligence and non-consciousness beget order, intelligence and consciousness? Without the First Cause Whose origin remains an absolute given and Whose knowledge is absolutely boundless, there is no sensible basis for the existence of life. An accident cannot be so great as to cause life and then continue to take giant random leaps, evolving from virtual mire to man. The crown of creation is not begotten of nothing.

Finally, the absence of consciousness from the origin of life in evolutionary thought presupposes the concomitant absence of a purpose for this world, for matter and, ultimately, for man. Here the evolutionists posit a realm and a being without a *raison d'être*, existence and essence without a premeditated direction. If there is no consciousness, there can be no intention, no motivation and hence no rationale for the existence of man. In terms of the concept of *fitrah*, Allāh, Who is all-conscious and the source of all consciousness, has built into all that exists a design and a purpose. Nothing is created in vain and everything is part of a grand de-

sign in creation. Man himself is appointed *khalifāh* and has a specific function, goal and direction in life. Allāh, exalted is He, says in the Qur'an:

'And I have not created jinn and human beings except that they should serve (worship) Me.'
(Qur'an 51: 56)

There is nothing sporadic, irregular or accidental about the origin of the universe; similarly there is nothing unpremeditated, aimless or random about the origin of life and man. Human consciousness, the entire human psychic dimension, cannot be shown to have evolved from instinctual and sensory experience to conceptual, moral, intellectual and subjective experience. Neither psychologists, nor philosophers, nor evolutionists can explain, in evolutionary terms, the abiding human faculties of insight and creativity. It may be possible to postulate hypotheses, however unscientific, concerning the evolving cranial capacity and cerebral aptitude of the human brain. It is certainly not possible to apply such hypotheses to the mind of man.

Natural selection and the whole edifice of evolutionary thought are based on nebulous assumptions and highly imaginative propositions which range from the origin to the destiny of man. Between these extremes lies a view of man which is a denial of the Divine source of human potential.

Thirdly, natural selection, as a random process devoid of all elements of intelligence and volition, tends towards a model of extreme determinism. The absence of a transcendental agent, that engages in conscious, intelligent and goal-directed decision-making, means that life is an 'accident'. Its subse-

quent mutations, by means of natural selection, progressed under external random processes which absolutely determined the course of evolution. Since the chance factor was the only absolute agent of change, no instinct, drive, or volition in any form of life, including man, can be said to account for the state and condition of life on this planet as it is today. This also means that the contemporary human condition is entirely the outcome of change through chance over aeons of geological time.

If one should apply these deductions to the evolutionary model, then, strictly speaking, man is not a free being but an organism whose thoughts and actions are determined by chance, an absolute external agent. Hence, man is neither responsible nor accountable for his actions since they are an absolute function of chance. Evolutionists should then believe, if the original assumptions concerning natural selection are taken to their logical conclusion, that man has no free-will, unless of course, they care to demonstrate how and where a volitional dimension has entered the 'other-than-material' constitution of *homo sapiens*.

The concept of *fitrah*, on the other hand, posits a model of man with free-will; *‘aql* and *iradāh* are God-given components of man's phenomenal constitution and enable him to make conscious decisions and to choose between good and evil, right and wrong, and make decisions, for which he is both responsible and accountable.

2. Freudian Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939 C.E.), a neurologist and psychotherapist, is popularly and erroneously

thought to have been the first to call attention to the unconscious dimension of the human psyche. Freud's theoretical formulations had a profound effect on medicine, psychology and education. The latter two views of man are particularly pertinent to my theme of the secular views of man, since the implications of such views for these disciplines stand in contra-distinction to the concept of *fitrah*. My investigation into the secular nature of Freud's thought will focus on those assumptions which relate to the dynamics of motivation and the psycho-sexual development of man.

What is the constitution of man? Freud's answer to this question is a vaguely defined set of structural mechanisms which are integrated with the human physical self; there are no references, except derogatory ones, to a metaphysical dimension of man. What is traditionally known as the soul or the spirit becomes a component of mental activity in Freudian terms. Thus, the mind is the seat of the entire other-than-material constitution of man.

According to Freud, man is essentially a physical being of physical bodily structures integrated with a mind comprising mental structures. These structures are the id, ego and super-ego. As a medical doctor, Freud realised the importance of the empirical and experimental method for substantiating his claims. While it was established convention to apply this method to matters medical, Freud was free to enter into unfounded conjecture in matters psychological. His propositions were, like those of the neo-Darwinians, highly speculative, except that Freud was bolder in his obviously unscientific utterances. Like all secular theories, psychoanalytic

theory denies the existence of the human spiritual essence.

For Freud, human experience in its entirety is confined to existential reality. Both the psychic and the sexual dimensions of the Freudian conception of human development relate exclusively to phenomenal, material and sensory dynamics. Within his mechanistic and materialistic framework, Freud found occasion to conceive even of religious experience and values in such terms. The mind and body (the mental and the sexual) are the only valid components of the human constitution, while spirituality is dismissed as a product of socialisation, foreign and external to the innate nature of man.

Like all secularists, Freud expunged the essence of man from his theory of human nature. Consequently, Freudian psychoanalysis, like Darwinian evolution, cannot reasonably conceive of the origin of man. Because psychoanalysis acknowledges only the mind, body and the phenomenal world as vital constituents of the only reality it can relate to, it is necessarily materialistic in orientation. The disparities between the concept of *fitrah* and the psychoanalytic concept of human nature should at this stage be too obvious to warrant further discussion. However, an examination of the basic secular tenets of psychoanalysis should prove illuminating.

What motivates human behaviour? According to Freud, man is a complex energy system. In terms of 19th century physics and physiology, any energy system functions in accordance with the law of conservation of energy.²² This principle underlies the notion of every individual as an isolated energy system. In man this energy is located in the psyche

and derives from neuro-physiological states of excitation which represent bodily tissue needs. These needs utilise psychic energy to achieve homoeostatic balance (**homoeostasis**, tendency towards relatively stable equilibrium between interdependent elements, especially as maintained by physiological processes). In pure psychological terms this means that these bodily needs and excitations are represented mentally in the form of instincts; and in order to achieve homoeostatic balance within the system, the individual mentally seeks to express and gratify his needs. This in turn affects observable behaviour.

Thus, in Freudian terms, instincts are inborn and are the ultimate cause of all human activity. The two major instincts which supposedly explain most of man's actions on earth are sex and aggression. In Chapter 1, I pointed out that *fitrah* may be described as an inborn primary motive force or drive to believe in, worship and obey Allāh. In this sense *fitrah* may be regarded as a spiritual instinct which induces virtue and a harmony with Allāh. There is thus a clear link between the inborn nature of man and the ultimate transcendental reality.

Freud, however, viewed instincts in purely physical, mechanistic terms. He applied the laws of physics, laws which govern material substance, to the immaterial nature of man. Apart from the obvious failings of Freud's propositions in experimental and quantitative terms, there remains the extremely fatalistic philosophy underlying his conception of the primary instincts.

No religious tradition has produced dogma explaining human motivation, feelings of guilt and in-

adequacy in such fictitious and absurd terms as Freud.²³ His hypothetical accounts of the dark horrors of sexual aberrations, polymorphously perverse infants and a host of similar conditions portrays a picture of man dominated by a bestial self.

Islam does not deny the sexual needs or the propensity for aggression in man. These are all God-given and legitimate aspects of man's nature, his *nafs*. They can be subjected to his *'aql* and his *iradah*, and are not necessarily in control of them. The innate guidance of *fitrah*, together with the external forms of guidance, enable man to govern his sexual and other needs in accordance with the *shari'ah*. This is one indication of the logical agreement and harmony between Divine guidance, Divine law and *fitrah*.

The dark pessimism of Freudian man, together with the mechanistic conception of human nature, offer no hope of happiness, resolution and peace for man. Instead, Freud sees man as an animal who is trapped in the deterministic rage of powerful and unconscious instinctual forces. In this cage there is no room for free will, choice, personal responsibility, spontaneity and self-determination. Freedom is simply an overwhelming illusion caused by apparent 'choices' between different courses of action while the actual forces which cause, control and determine such choices are unconscious. The determinism, like the absolute freedom of existentialism, is based on secular assumptions which rule out the role of the Divine Being in times of difficulty. The hopelessness and meaninglessness of human existence underlying such thought is repulsive to those who accept the picture of *fitrah*.

The Divine attributes of mercy and justice, together with human freedom and responsibility, contribute to hope in purpose and ultimately salvation in the natural course of man's destiny. The inborn nature of man and its Creator cannot be subject to arbitrary forces conceived in the minds of fatalistic secularists.

The determinism of Freud's view of man is also a function of what he termed the psycho-sexual stages of human development. These stages progress from birth and are driven by sexual energy (*libido*). This energy is focussed on what Freud termed 'primary erogenous zones of the body' and is the chief force in psycho-sexual development in infancy, childhood and the adolescent years of the individual. Development occurs in a biologically determined sequence, is unchanging in its order and is not affected by socialisation. Freud does, however, acknowledge that social experiences at each individual stage do leave some permanent residue in the form of beliefs, values and attitudes.

But Freud regarded these values as foreign and external accretions of man (as opposed to inborn and internal). Therefore libidinal energy is the single most powerful force which controls man's behaviour and destiny. The blend of primary instinctual energy and secondary socialisation factors during childhood, absolutely dominates the state of mind and the behaviour of every individual. The notions of over-indulgence and frustration of the instinctual forces at the successive stages of psycho-sexual development and of fixation and regression during adulthood inherently contain the idea of the compelling determinism of past experience.

In other words, man's destiny is determined overwhelmingly by his past.

Freudian man is hopelessly under the control of abiding instinctual forces and childhood experiences. In such a conception the absence of the dimension of free-will to man's nature rules out the need for responsibility and accountability. It is significant that Freud viewed man as a completely irrational being whose entire mental and physical self is ultimately subservient to his unconscious mind. Rationality, like freedom, is an illusion; neither the intellect nor the imaginary free-will can emancipate man from the grasp of his unconscious, instinctual self.

In contrast to the Freudian conception of human development, the Islamic view may be described as psycho-spiritual. Both psychic and spiritual dimensions are recognised. The link between *nafs* (the phenomenal self) and *rūh* (the transcendental self), already referred to above, becomes manifest in terms of the relationship they share. The dynamic phenomenal *nafs* can be described only in relation to the immutable pure essence of the *ruh*. An individual can be said to be true to his *fiṭrah* only when his consciousness, informed by his *ʿaql* and his *iradāh*, heeds the internal and external sources of guidance.

Note how radically different the Islamic view is to the Freudian view: it is the conscious as opposed to the unconscious state which influences man's behaviour. Also, the inborn 'energy' or 'force' which influences human behaviour is not instinctual, but spiritual. *Fiṭrah*, as an internal source of guidance, is centred in the *rūh*; it is a spiritual, not a psychic

or biological instinct and there is nothing evolutionary about it. It engenders the capacity to recognise, worship and obey Allāh and has nothing to do with arousing or gratifying sexual passions. It is a constant – having been derived from pre-existence – through existence to post-existence and is unaffected by the limitations of phenomenal reality.

Even the Islamic conception of *nafs* does not agree in any way with Freudian psycho-sexual development. We need to acknowledge that biological and psychological developmental factors are significant during infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The Freudian notion of the primacy of unconscious sexual motives underlying these stages must be rejected – not only because his pseudorational presentation is totally devoid of empirical proof, but mainly because of the nihilism in such a conception.

Freud's use of the unconscious is a convenient subterfuge for the untenable and fallacious assumptions he makes concerning man's inner nature. Infants and children are innocent and their sexuality is not corrupted by forces from the recesses of their unconscious minds. Nor are adults afflicted by guilt, neuroses or feelings of inadequacy because of hypothetical instances of fixation or regression.

Sexuality was a dirty concept to the puritanical minds of Viennese bourgeoisie. Freud had found occasion to base his assumptions on his experience of treating such patients. As such, his theory is a gross over-generalisation from an extremely unrepresentative sample. Sex, for a Muslim, is a grace from Allāh, which must be engaged in with due consideration of Divine law.

On the other hand, if he breaks the law, Allāh admonishes man to seek the forgiveness of his merciful and compassionate Lord for his wrong actions. Divine mercy offers man the opportunity to redeem himself and to return to his original state of purity. Psycho-spiritual development is an optimistic, realistic and equitable conception of the nature of man.

Another secular dimension of Freud's theory is his conception of the human organism as tending, in terms of the law of conservation of energy, towards homoeostasis. The psychoanalytic parallel to this 'scientific' principle of physics is known as *thanatos*²⁴ – the death instinct. It posits that there is an unconscious desire within the individual to maintain a metabolic equilibrium by opposing the life instinct (*eros*)²⁵ in order to achieve a state of rest in death. Crudely put, every human being has an unconscious wish to die.

To associate a principle of physics with a highly conjectural notion of human nature is an academic fallacy of an audacious order, but to condemn man as a creature innately bent on his own destruction is immensely iniquitous indeed. Homoeostasis is a scientific concept applicable to processes in the phenomenal realm; man is a spiritual being whose transcendental nature cannot be subjected to the principles of physical science.

Fitrah, as a spiritual instinct, tends towards its source – Allāh. The *nafs*, or the phenomenal self in man, as the dynamic aspect of the human constitution is defined solely in terms of its relation to the *rūh*. A state of psycho-spiritual equilibrium is said to exist when the individual endows his *nafs*

with the qualities of the *rūh* by consciously obeying the commands of Allāh and by seeking to establish a harmony between his *nafs* and his *fitrah*.

The fearfully obedient individual, who has attained this state of *an-nafs al-mutma'innāh* or psycho-spiritual equilibrium, is beyond homoeostasis or, its opposite, heterostasis. He rises above physical reality in order to attain a realisation of ultimate reality. There is no rest in this world, for Allāh has created man in a state of toil and affliction.²⁶

The mechanistic ethos of Freud's theory is also founded on the fundamental secular assumption of the ultimate knowability of man and his nature. Freud insisted that man, as a discreet biological organism (for this was believed to be his essence), obeyed the same laws of nature as any other organism. Hitherto unknown aspects of human nature could thus be uncovered by means of the supposedly scientifically based techniques of psychoanalysis.

Although Freud never proclaimed his psychoanalysis to be a complete theory of personality or human nature,²⁷ he was convinced that psychoanalysis held the key to the enigma of human nature.

Secularism, by definition, rejects religious truths and confers absolute authenticity and validity upon rationalism and the scientific method. While Islam gives due recognition to the role of science and reason in the phenomenal world, these cannot be allowed to intrude (as absolute determinants of knowledge) where natural laws simply do not exist. The innate nature of man is spiritual and it bears the indelible, incorruptible and immutable stamp of its Divine origin which can never totally be revealed to

man in this life.

Freud fell far short of the empiricism he so idealised. His thought is firmly rooted in the humanistic assumptions of man's egotistical belief in his own independence and boundless knowledge. Knowability is a scientific farce akin to Darwinian evolution because it is based on totally unfounded assumptions about man and reality.

The primordial covenant, the elements of *ʿaql* and *iradah* in the *nafs*, and the essential *fitrah* are the fundamental constituents of man's knowledge of his own being and existence. All knowledge belongs to Allāh, and He reveals to man what He wills. Those who humble themselves in this world, apply their intellects and free-wills to making the state of *nafs* agree with the essence of *fitrah* and seek to draw close to Allāh, truly attain wisdom of human nature. Where science and reason fail, guided self-restraint reveals the truths of man to man, by the grace of Allāh.

Whilst there is a need to acknowledge Freud's contribution to the study of the unconscious, there is also a need to challenge the clearly anti-religious and hostile overtones of his theory. A 'credible' psychoanalysis must necessarily assail those values it conceives as fundamentally antithetical to its secular creed.

Conversely religious values and, more specifically, the Islamic concept of man must denounce all psychological theories which do not acknowledge the spiritual essence of the human constitution and the metaphysical order of reality. Psychoanalysis is wanting in both respects.

3. Behaviourism

Behaviourism is a radical form of objective psychology, developed early in the 20th century, which rejects all references to introspection, consciousness and subjectivity in favour of a model based on the stimulus-response approach. An examination of behaviourism as a secular view of man necessarily involves a discussion of some of the fundamental assumptions associated with the behaviourist view of man and how it conflicts with the principles of the Islamic conception of *fitrah*.

First, it is important to note that behaviourism is not an attempt to explain human nature – because behaviourists do not believe that man possesses a nature – but rather to provide an experimental, descriptive analysis of what can be observed of human behaviour in terms of human behaviour. Behaviourism may properly be regarded as a reaction to the subjective-descriptive approach to the study of human behaviour – it insists on the empirical validation of its propositions as requisite for a valid psychological theory.

John B. Watson (1878-1958 C.E.) made the first bold and original attempt to insist on the objectivity of data, the precision of instruments and the recording of responses in experimental situations. His study was made by a molecular or atomistic procedure which involved the breaking down of responses into analytical units of conditioned reflexes. Tolman (1886-1959 C.E.) postulated a non-teleological purposivism (**teleology**, the doctrine of final causes, view that developments are due to the purpose or design that is served by them). This held that since there is no cosmic design or purpose in

reality, human behaviour can be absolutely organised and regulated in accordance with objectively determined goals. As such, it is theoretically possible, as with any other experiment, to predict and to extrapolate human behaviour, and indeed human destiny itself. B.F. Skinner (b. 1904 C.E.), the most recent influential figure in behaviourism, is the central theorist in my discussion.

Unlike psychoanalysis, behaviourism chooses to ignore processes, events and states which occur 'inside' or 'under the skin' of man. This is for the simple reason that these are not tangible, cannot be objectively measured or observed and therefore do not fall within the ambit of a scientific study of behaviour.

As I have already made reference to the assumptions of modern science and its foundations of empiricism, naturalism, rationalism and materialism, the association between secular science and behaviourism, as expounded below, should be self-evident. A fundamental assumption of behaviourism, as explicitly formulated by Tolman, is the humanist notion that, since there is no design or purpose in this phenomenal world of reality, it is for man to make sense of this reality. Only man has the capacity to establish logical relations in time. He is the central focus, the alpha and the omega of all existence. He is the dynamic variable in the environment that effects the irrevocable process of evolution towards absolute control, absolute knowledge and absolute power. Man is the centre of the universe.

Skinnerian behaviourism also proceeds from those assumptions. Because Skinner is solely con-

cerned with objective existential reality, he can be considered an absolute environmentalist as opposed to a constitutionalist. Constitutional factors, such as motives, drives, attitudes and emotions, are ignored by Skinner in accounting for human behaviour. Absolute significance is given to environmental factors. He regards people as different from each other, not because they are genetically different or because they have innately different natures, but only because they have different sets of stimulus responses or reinforcement histories. In other words, their past conditioning is the only real and essential difference.

The influence of materialist and rational philosophy on behaviourism eliminated value distinctions such as right and wrong environmental stimuli from Skinner's theory. He regards them as either positive or negative; virtue simply becomes a label for what he terms a case of positive reinforcement. Thus a charitable, generous and humane individual gives only because he has been conditioned to give; there is nothing of a supposed innate nature which induces or causes such behaviour. Because the subjective analyses of man are necessarily abstract, behaviourists regard the 'unscientific' approach to psychology inherent in the introspective method as an impasse.

They insist that the subject matter of psychology should be behaviour, and not consciousness. Observation, experimentation and quantification are the pillars of the essential scientific approach of behaviourism. Behavioural engineering or a technology of behaviour in humanly controlled and clinical environments are integral to Skinnerian psy-

chology.

In the behaviourist view of man, the human organism is fundamentally seen as a machine, albeit, a very complex one. Mechanistic man is thus placed under the scrutiny of scientific man. In behaviourist discourse, human behaviour can be understood through a detailed analysis of its constituent parts – in very much the same way as the workings of a manual typewriter may be understood through a combined functioning of its different components. In behaviourism, personality is constructed over time – element by element – so that the whole can be seen as the sum of the parts.

Consequently, man is ultimately knowable. All that is yet unknown of the human organism can be uncovered in time. Owing to the evolution of knowledge, the obscure, unknown and abstruse aspects of the total human constitution can be laid bare in good time because science will soon be in a position to unfold all the parts that make up man.

Skinner's uncompromising commitment to the elementalistic approach, which breaks the human into component elements as opposed to the holistic approach to psychology, and his belief in the knowability of man are coupled with his belief in the changeability and reactivity of human behaviour. Machines and rats can be manipulated and controlled to perform functions and behaviours desired by the controller and to respond in a specified manner.

Similarly it is possible, in his view, for man to manipulate and control the behaviour of other human beings. All this is integrally tied to the neat concept of environmental determinism. Again, one

may refer to an analogy from empirical science in order to illustrate how Skinnerian behaviourism sees every human action as both lawful and pre-determined. Gravitational attraction causes objects located above the surface of the earth to gravitate towards the centre of the earth's gravity. Similarly, every human action, in Skinnerian terms, is described as the effect of a specified observable cause in the environment. Skinner maintains that this is so by law: 'our "independent variables" – the causes of behaviour – are the external conditions of which behaviour is a function'.²⁸

Essentially, Skinner insists that the scientific study of man, i.e. behaviourism, is the only valid branch of psychology. The principle scientific proposition in such a study is that all human behaviour is governed by causal laws which can be identified scientifically. In other words, for any piece of behaviour there is a finite set of environmental conditions (past and present) which caused the behaviour. It is a causal law that anyone to whom all these conditions apply will perform that behaviour.²⁹ Skinner's commitment to environmental determinism is fundamental and absolute.

When evaluating behaviourism, note the absence and rejection of any innate nature and of a transcendental reality in this view of man. It is subsequently engaged with the conception of man as a significant variable in phenomenal reality. In Tolman's purposivism, in which man is the component which lends order and meaning to all existence, one finds the real substance of humanism: cosmic design, the purpose of reality and sustenance of life are ultimately all attributed to human en-

deavour. The problem with this view is not simply the absence of innate and transcendental elements in man and in reality, but more especially the dubious assumption that man is independent and self-sufficient. And it is not without a deceptively appealing logic that behaviourism argues an anthropocentric (man-centred) as opposed to a theocentric (God-centred) view of man.

I challenge the behaviourist fallacy that man, with science and technology as his tools, possesses the key to discovering what is ultimately true and correct. Behaviourist philosophy proceeds from this unattested assumption. It is reasonable to subject behaviourist claims to the same rigorous examination behaviourism requires of religious world-views, for example.

We have already referred to the association between modern science and contemporary secular trends. Skinner, like all secular scientists, insists that all 'inner psychic' states or all events which occur 'under the skin' are irrelevant and futile in a valid study of human behaviour. While behaviourists acknowledge that such inner states do exist, they strongly reject that they play any role in behaviour. This rejection of inner states as significant elements in human behaviour is in itself quite unscientific and dangerous.

The assumptions which attend it lend behaviourism, as a technological tool, the power to solve the problems of human life and society, 'if only we will give up our illusions about individual freedom, responsibility and dignity'.³⁰ It is again satanic pride and arrogance, offering man the false promise of a kingdom that never decays, in the form of a tech-

nology of evolving cultures.³¹

Skinner claims that, like Darwinian evolution, 'the process of cultural evolution would not come to an end',³² the reason being that certain mutations are continuously selected when they favour survival in the environment in which a culture is living. In these terms it would not be relevant to see Hitler's attempts at creating a master race as genocide, rather as unsuccessful attempts to manipulate the dependent variables in the cultural environment in order to create a master culture.³³ In other words, Nazism lacked survival value; intrinsic human or religious values of right and wrong or human dignity have nothing to do with it. The question of values will again be referred to below.

In more objective terms, the rejection of inner states in favour of a 'more scientific than most scientists' approach represents a rather confusing mixture of methodological precept and empirical theory. Clearly, the various branches of modern science postulate theoretical entities such as magnetic fields, subatomic particles, the speed of light, etc., which are unobservable directly by the senses. Not even contemporary logical positivism construes this as undermining hallowed scientific method. Therefore, Skinner's insistence on the exclusion of inner states just because they are unobservable directly by the senses is patently dogmatic and unscientific. From this dogma proceeds his assumption that all behaviour is governed by causal laws, 'the external conditions of which behaviour is a function'.³⁴ There is nothing scientific about this assumption, because it is not subjected to empirical tests and is an unproven hypothesis in behaviourism. It is more

a hypothetical postulate directly related to the philosophical discussions on human freedom and determinism. Such a position ill befits a strict empiricist such as Skinner.

The concept of *fiṭrah* represents the perfect balance between external circumstantial causes and inborn constitutional causes of behaviour. Indeed, *fiṭrah* describes both the material and the spiritual aspects of man's existence. It accounts for more than just the behaviour of man which is confined to empirical validation. *Fiṭrah* is fundamentally a definition of man's spiritual essence, but also includes all observable entities.

In Chapter 2, I referred to the positive view of *fiṭrah* as the ideal view of man. We can claim this with confidence because such an interpretation accounts for behaviour as a function of circumstances (or the phenomenal world) as an element of causation, as well as behaviour which cannot be attributed to circumstantial causes. Belief in immutable physical laws is a metaphysical construct and this is conceded by empiricists themselves;³⁵ however, belief in elements of circumstantial causation as a satisfactory explanation for every component of human behaviour is held only by dogmatic behaviourists such as Skinner. Behaviourism offers an explanation in terms of mechanical dynamics of every human action. It searches for laws and establishes precepts even where they make no sense.

On the other hand, the Islamic view of man, places the *nafs* or the dynamic aspects of man (his phenomenal self) in direct relation to the *rūh* or spirit (his transcendental self). Proper theoretical appli-

cation of the concept of *fitrah* renders the explanation and interpretation of human behaviour sounder and more believable.

The introspective method is not a means to conveniently explain away those aspects of human behaviour which cannot be proved empirically. On the contrary, it is a means to render a more wholesome account of behaviour by giving due recognition to both the essential metaphysical or spiritual reality and the phenomenal reality (i.e. of phenomena – of things and events) which underlie the sum total of human existence.

The behaviourist model of observable reinforcement contingencies and circumstantial causation can easily be challenged with reference to common examples from everyday life. Humanitarian qualities, such as selfless generosity and compassion for others, can be attributed to clearly observable reinforcements only with great difficulty. Similarly, the dedication and commitment of believers to ideals such as truth, knowledge and justice, through passive means or through *jihād* on the battlefield, cannot simplistically be explained as the outcome of their conditioning history.

Moreover, no amount of negative reinforcement could compel the companions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, during the onslaught of the then pagan Quraysh to renounce their commitment to *tawhīd*. How can worship be designated an operant behaviour, a function of anticipated physical rewards whether short term or long term? *Salāh*, *zakāh* and supplication, as instances of personal and private submission to a spiritual being, are not contingent on any tangible

reward in this world.

Behaviourism fails to acknowledge that a significant part of human behaviour can be related to causes from transcendental reality within or outside man. This is not only because people claim it to be true, but primarily because the random application of the stimulus-response approach to everything in phenomenal experience without any empirical evidence makes nonsense of so-called scientific method.

In Chapter 6 of *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, Skinner expounds on the concept of values and behaviourism. Essentially, he argues that science, particularly behaviourism, should enter the arena of, and prescribe the criteria for, decision making which relates to conventional value judgements. Issues such as nuclear warfare, euthanasia, sexual practices and sexual diseases, etc., should be addressed by behaviourism rather than by religion. What is both most objectionable and inapposite about this approach is Skinner's concept of values. He defines values strictly in terms of events and conditions to which man can respond or which he can apprehend by means of sense experience. The materialist concept of values reduces all things to being worldly – things which by Allāh's decree must eventually perish.

The Muslim, however, believes in eternal values – values which are not worldly and which are approached by ideals such as *jihād* and martyrdom. The reinforcements or rewards for material values are material. Since *jihād* and martyrdom are not dependent on strictly material reward, behaviourism cannot explain why Muslims over fourteen hun-

dred centuries have engaged in such endeavours.

Spiritual values are reinforced by both material rewards and belief in Allāh. They are also dependent upon events and conditions in the phenomenal world as well as in metaphysical reality. Behaviourist values locate absolute significance and validity in phenomenal reality in terms of some undefined and abstruse 'common good' derived from equally evanescent and relative secular systems, some of which I have referred to in this chapter.

The Islamic ideal is to produce harmony between *fiṭrah* and the *nafs* through a conscious realisation of the innate spiritual reality together with conscious manipulation of the phenomenal reality – reality based on the theoretical framework of the external source of guidance. Man's innate nature is the unchanging given; his spiritual essence – *fiṭrah* – is absolute, but his phenomenal constitution, his self – *nafs* – is variable and exists in a dynamic relation to phenomenal reality.

Given the strict environmentalist approach of behaviourism it is appropriate to ask how scientific can a technology of behaviour be if it is not founded on any abiding values, universal principles or eternal truths? How realistic and practical can behaviourism be if it cannot establish or possibly evolve (*sic*) accepted norms, standards and codes of conduct which can serve all nations at all times? In this sense behaviourism is a reductionist concoction of trial and error conjecture which is no more scientific than a science-fiction movie. Hence the behaviourist model of reward and punishment and of the ideal socio-political condition is unrealistic.

Apart from Skinner's purely materialistic ap-

proach to reward and punishment he also sees the logical consequence of sustained contingencies of reinforcement as the survival of the fittest.³⁶ Whether they involve the annihilation of virtuous practices or oppressed communities, such reinforcements are good and positive.³⁷ Negative reinforcements or punishments – whether institutionalised or in the family – are the only bad things.³⁸

The logic and creed of punishment is integral to Islamic belief and practice. The Islamic penal system does not comprise a mere collection of 'aversive stimuli' which, according to behaviourists, tend to create rather than extinguish undesirable behaviours. The *shari'ah* teaches, instructs and admonishes man by enjoining good and forbidding evil. It addresses his *'aql* and *iradāh* with which he is naturally endowed. It stamps on his consciousness the reality of reward and punishment in the Hereafter. It acknowledges man's total constitution, the dynamism of *nafs* and the immutability of his *fitrah*.

The reductionism in the behaviourist concept of values offers a simplistic explanation of what a religious world-view designates as wrongdoing. Imbalance, disequilibrium, inequality, injustice, etc. have been integral to human reality since time immemorial. They are there because they are external manifestations of primordial secularism. The behaviourists see these as negative environmental stimuli. They believe that human reality can be disentangled from them by creating a controlled environment, a technology of behaviour based on the mechanical response of rats and pigeons in Skinner's boxes. At best, wrongdoing, in a secular world-view, is that which undermines the material world-view

of men and the indefinite existence of this world.

Islamically, wrongdoing is an existential given, diametrically opposed to that which is right. Man is an agent who is essentially independent of wrong stimuli, but truly susceptible to their influence. Behaviourism engages in an elementalistic analysis of phenomenal reality by designating any stimulus as either positively or negatively reinforcing. Not only is this rejection of a transcendental reality, but it presumes a complete and accurate understanding of man and phenomenal reality.

Human knowledge has never been complete and to suggest that it ever will be is simply rash conjecture. Furthermore, a reality without wrongdoing or, if you will, negative reinforcements, has never existed and never will because, historically, realistically and existentially, man is, and always will be, in a state of struggle with hostile forces.

The rightly-guided individual is he who is in a state of struggle against all forms of wrongdoing in the environment as a means to attain ultimate success in another reality – a reality which agrees with his innate nature and which is the logical consequence of the disorder and disequilibrium in phenomenal reality. The misguided individual sees himself strictly as an agent bound to phenomenal reality, with no innate nature, no other reality and no other existence. Hence this world is a means and an end in itself; both worldly success and failure ultimately collapse into nihilism with death as the obliteration of human individuals.

Sartrean existentialism and behaviourist determinism represent the two extremes on the freedom-determinism continuum. Although these world-

views differ radically in this respect, humanist and materialist secular elements are integral to both.

Fitrah focusses squarely on man as being created with an innate nature wedded to a psychic and a physical self, drawing him towards his primordial goodness and enabling him to consciously act as decision maker in an environment where stimuli of guidance and misguidance impinge on his consciousness. *‘Aql* and *iradāh* are attributes which set man apart from other living beings and the proper appropriation of them sets the rightly guided individuals apart from misguided ones. Individual free-will cannot be proven a myth just as determinism cannot be proven empirically true.

The Muslim accepts the inadequacy of human knowledge to explain the free-will/determinism problem; it is sufficient to believe in man's limited free-will and that Allah alone has true and complete knowledge of freedom, determinism and predestination. In this chapter, I have attempted to show how the concept of *fitrah* can pose an intellectual challenge to various secular theories of human nature.

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cf. Phillip Sherrard, *The Rape of Nature*, (Suffolk, Golgongoza Press, 1987).
See also Nasr, *Man and Nature*, op. cit., p. 54.
3. Attas, op. cit., p. 32-33; cf. Nasr, op. cit., p. 62; and Sherrard, op. cit., pp. 54-59.
4. Sherrard, *The Rape of Nature*, op. cit., p. 55.
5. Nasr, *Man and Nature*, op. cit., p. 64.
6. Ibid., p. 64.
7. Attas, op. cit., p. 33; cf. Nasr, op. cit., p. 71.
8. Ibid., p. 35.
9. R. Guenon, *The Crises of the Modern World*, (Lahore, Suhail Academy, 1981) p. 51.
10. Ibid., p. 54.
11. Ibid., p. 54.
12. Ibid., pp. 54-55.
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14. Ibid., p. 9.
15. Ibid., p. 13.
16. Y. Mohamed, *Islamization of Knowledge: A Critique in The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (Vol. 1, No. 2), (Washington: AMSS/IIIT, 1994), pp. 282-284; cf. I.R. Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge*, (USA: IIIT, 1982); cf. Y. Mohamed, *Islamization of Knowledge: A Revivalist Response to Modernity in Muslim Educational Quarterly*, (Cambridge: The Islamic Academy, 1993), Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 12-23.
17. Ibid., p. 282.

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21. M. Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, (Burnett Books, 1985), p. 43.
22. This law is based on the principle of physics that the total energy of any isolated system is constant and independent of any changes occurring within the system.
23. cf. Freud's *Totem and Taboo*.
24. Thanatos in Greek mythology was the personification of death. He was the son of Nyx, the goddess of night.
25. In Greek mythology Eros was the god of love. He was the son of Aphrodite.
26. Qur'an 90: 4.
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30. Ibid., p. 94.
31. B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 126-179.
32. Ibid., p. 136.
33. Ibid., Ibid., p. 136.
34. Skinner, *Science and Human Behaviour*, op. cit., p. 35.
35. W.M. See Fitch, and K. Upper, (1982). The evolution of life – an overview of general problems and a specific study of the origins of the genetic code. In M. W. Ho and S. W. Fox (Eds) *Evolutionary Processes and Metaphors*. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1988), p. 38. See also Stevenson, p. 97.
36. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, op. cit., p. 109.
37. Ibid., p. 107.
38. Ibid., p. 107.

Conclusion

In attempting a definition of *fiṭrah*, I have made a clear distinction between *fiṭrah* as an ontological reality and *fiṭrah* as an intellectual category. I have given an exposition of the four interpretations of *fiṭrah*; criticising the predestinarian, dual and neutral perspectives, and demonstrating a clear preference for the positive interpretation of *fiṭrah*. I have sought to develop the implications of this interpretation in terms of its metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, psychological, volitional and legal dimensions. Finally, I have demonstrated how *fiṭrah*, as an intellectual concept, can be used for an Islamic critique of secular theories of human nature.

This study was never intended to be exhaustive, but I hope that it would sufficiently stimulate further development in the following areas.

Firstly, it should serve as a basis for developing a comprehensive Islamic theory of human nature and human behaviour. This theory should elaborate on the various elements of human nature: will, the intellect, the soul, the instincts, the emotions and their mutual interactions.

Secondly, *fiṭrah* should be used for an authentic Islamisation of knowledge which presupposes a critical response to secular modernity. In Chapter 4, I used *fiṭrah* as an intellectual concept to analyse

theories of human nature in the disciplines of psychology and biology.

Thirdly, the study of *fiṭrah* should encourage the development of Islamic psychology as an independent discipline. This task is consistent with the *ijmali* critique of scholars such as Mansoor, Sardar and Davies. They believe that no genuine Islamisation of disciplines can be achieved without questioning the secular framework of those disciplines.

Independent disciplines within the world-view of Islam should be established, and key Islamic concepts, such as *fiṭrah*, *tawḥīd*, *khilafāh*, and *iman*, should shape such disciplines. *Fiṭrah* should be a key concept in the development of an Islamic psychology as demonstrated in my M.A. dissertation. Positive features of modern psychology can be established only once the foundations of an Islamic psychology are established.

If this book on *fiṭrah* does not benefit in any of the ways mentioned above, but if it makes us realise that true faith is intrinsic to our inner being, it will have served its fundamental objective.

This study of *fiṭrah* is timely because Western-educated Muslims who are affected by the spirit of individualism are asking questions about their origin, their nature and their destination. They are also asking about 'fundamentalist' movements and their view of Islam and human nature. The dual view of human nature was presented in Chapter 2 essentially as 'fundamentalist' in its concept of *jihād*; the dual view, however, is not representative of the revivalist perceptions of human nature.

The positive view of *fiṭrah*, the connecting thread in all four chapters, seemed more concerned with

inner struggle against the lower self to attain spiritual transformation. This can only be achieved by a proper use of the will and intellect without which man cannot be a *khalifāh*. The positive view draws attention to the spiritual and moral responsibility of the individual. This responsibility is the basis for religious renewal as well as social and moral reform in a modern society. Social ills have survived governmental legislation which only curbs the consequences of social ills such as divorce, child abuse, crime, poverty and AIDS. Governments, of Muslim or non-Muslim countries, should not undermine the impact of moral and spiritual values in shaping society and in fighting the causes of social ills.

It should be remembered that the inalterable *fiṭrah* can be obscured by the negative impact of the social, political and philosophical environment. Man must therefore turn to Divine revelation for guidance; not only for a proper conception of his *fiṭrah*, but also for the precepts and injunctions which enable him to recover it.

The Qur'anic call for man to live in accordance with his *fiṭrah* presents him with a challenge and a promise. The challenge is to take the Qur'an and *Sunnāh* as the bases for his social and individual life so that he may live in harmony with his *fiṭrah* and become liberated from the spiritual and social alienation of the modern world. The promise for following the straight path (*as-sirat al-mustaqim*) is spiritual and social harmony in this world and Paradise in the next for the god-fearing.

The tragedies and setbacks of human history are due to man's alienation from *fiṭrah*; for as long as Muslims do not uphold the Qur'an and the *Sun-*

nāh, they will remain divided and subordinate to world imperialism and other secular forces.

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A Glossary of Arabic Terms

^ʿ <i>abd</i>	a slave (of Allāh)
Allāh	the name of the divine majesty
<i>ahliyyat al-ada'</i>	active legal capacity which can incur rights as well as obligations
<i>ahliyyat al-wujub</i>	receptive legal capacity to receive but not incur obligations
<i>amanāh</i>	the trust (of intellect and will)
^ʿ <i>aql</i>	reason, intellect, faculty of rational and intuitive perception
<i>āyah</i>	a sign or a verse from the Qur'an
<i>bulūgh</i>	age of sexual maturity, age of majority
<i>dhikr</i>	the mention and the remembrance of Allāh, His presence in the consciousness of mankind
<i>ad-dīn</i>	the perfect religion which Allāh has ordained for humanity, including faith, ethics, law and devotions
<i>dīn al-ḥiṭrah</i>	the religion of human nature
<i>ad-dīn al-ḥanīf</i>	the religion of <i>tawḥīd</i>
<i>dīn al-Islām</i>	the religion of Islam
<i>fara'id</i>	obligations (sing. <i>fard</i>)

<i>ḥadīth</i>	the verbalised form of a tradition of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS) which can be an evidence of a <i>sunnah</i>
<i>hawā</i>	passion, caprice
<i>iḥsan</i>	the perfect fulfilment of the commands of Allāh; the state of the person whose deeds achieve such fulfilment
<i>īmān</i>	faith, affirmation, conviction or certainty that Allāh is the one and only God and that Muḥammad (SAAS) is His last Prophet, and that the angels, revealed books, the prophets, the Last Day, and the decree of good and evil are all true
<i>al-insān al-kāmil</i>	the universal man, the perfect man
<i>irādāh</i>	will, free-will
<i>Islam</i>	submission and surrender to the will of Allāh; from a root denoting peace
<i>jihād</i>	struggle in the cause of Allāh
<i>al-jihād al-akbar</i>	the greater struggle (against the <i>nafs</i> , the self)
<i>al-jihād al-aṣghar</i>	the lesser struggle (by means of fighting with weapons)
<i>kāmil</i>	complete
<i>khalifāh</i>	vicegerent of Allāh, a successor, one continuing the institution of governance of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS)
<i>kufr</i>	disbelief, covering over (the

	truth)
<i>Muslim</i>	a proper designation of the person who submits to Allāh and adheres to Islam
<i>nafs</i>	self, soul, psyche
<i>an-nafs al-ammarāh</i>	the commanding self
<i>naqis</i>	deficient
<i>nubuwwāh</i>	prophethood, consists of receiving verbatim a message from Allāh
<i>al-Qur'an</i>	the final revelation of Allah to the Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS), conveyed in Arabic and memorised by his companions
<i>ar-risālāh</i>	the message; the commissioning by Allāh of a human to convey and exemplify His message
<i>nizām islāmī</i>	the rule (or order) of Islam
<i>nizām jāhili</i>	the rule (or order) of ignorance
<i>an-nafs al-lawwamah</i>	the reproachful self
<i>an-nafs al-muṭma'innah</i>	the tranquil self
<i>rūh</i>	the spirit, the soul
<i>shahadāh</i>	the act of witnessing that there is but Allāh and that Muḥammad is His Prophet; the verbal content of that act
<i>shahwah</i>	appetite, passion, desire, combination of sexual and aggressive instincts
<i>ash-sharī'ah</i>	the collective name for all the

	laws of Islam, including Islam's whole religious, liturgical, ethical and juridical systems
<i>shirk</i>	association of other beings with Allāh; the opposite of <i>tawḥīd</i>
<i>sinn at-tamyiz</i> <i>sunnāh</i>	the age of discretion the practice of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS) and of the <i>khulafa'</i> (RA) who followed him
<i>tawbāh</i>	turning from one's <i>kufr</i> and from one's wrong actions to Allāh while committed never to return to <i>kufr</i> or to repeat the wrong action
<i>tawḥīd</i>	unification; the science of knowing Allāh's unity (oneness); the opposite of <i>shirk</i>
<i>taklif</i> <i>taqwa</i>	liability, obligation Allāh consciousness, fear of Allāh, piety, carefulness
<i>qalb</i>	heart, the organ of intuitive perception

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